

*The North Caucasus in the Second Half of the Sixteenth
Century: Imperial Entanglements and Shifting Loyalties*

by

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Abstract

The present dissertation seeks to present and analyze the hitherto poorly understood first encounter between the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Muscovy in the North Caucasus from the Muscovites' annexation of the nearby Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556 and subsequent penetration into this region, to their expulsion from it by the Ottomans in 1605. The study relies on both Ottoman and Muscovite sources, both documentary and narrative, as well as archival and published. The main archival documentary sources are the Ottoman *mühimme defters* (registers of orders issued by the Imperial Council [*Divan-i Hümayun*]) and the Muscovite *posol'skie knigi* (registers of diplomatic documentation, including ambassadorial reports, diplomatic correspondence, and other documents administered by the Ambassadorial Office [*Posol'skii Prikaz*]). The main narrative sources are sixteenth-century Ottoman and Muscovite chronicles. On the basis of the Ottoman and Muscovite documentary sources it is possible to determine what Ottoman and Muscovite policies in the North Caucasus were, to what degree they were well-formulated, and how they evolved during the aforementioned time period. It becomes clear that

Ottoman and Muscovite policies in the Pontic-Caspian steppes and specifically in the North Caucasus had some superficial similarities, but were in essence fundamentally different. Taking into account that it was only after Muscovy's expansion into the North Caucasus that the Ottomans decided to take an active stand in the north, the dissertation also shows the ways in which Muscovite steppe policy not only affected the political structures on the frontiers but also influenced Ottoman northern policy, and specifically in the North Caucasus. However, this dissertation is not solely a study of an imperial rivalry in a contested frontier zone. The Ottoman and Muscovite involvement brought about changes to the internal dynamics of the polities within the North Caucasus. Lastly, during the first round of this imperial clash, Ottoman and Muscovite presence and sway in the North Caucasus underwent several extreme and unexpected shifts. These shifts and resulting new strategies that the Ottomans and Muscovites had to develop in the North Caucasus played an important role in their future encounters in the northern Black Sea region.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Lands, Peoples, Religious Culture, and Events in the North Caucasus in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: An Overview.....	31
1.1 The Land.....	31
1.2 The People.....	35
1.2.1 The Kabardinians.....	36
1.2.2 The Adyghes (Western Circassians).....	39
1.2.3 The Daghestanis.....	41
1.2.4 The Cossacks.....	45
1.2.5 The Nogays.....	47
1.3 Religious Culture in the North Caucasus.....	48
1.4 The North Caucasus: An Overview of the Sixteenth Century.....	51
Chapter 2: The Ottoman Empire and the North Caucasus.....	70
2.1 The Road to Astrakhan: Towards a Mature Policy in the North.....	80
2.2 The Campaign and its Aftermath: Kabarda Subjugated.....	95
2.3 Killing Two Birds with One Stone: The Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590.....	102
2.4 The Porte is in Charge: The Safavid War and North Caucasus.....	111
Chapter 3: Muscovy and the North Caucasus.....	142
3.1 “Under His Tsar’s Hand”: Muscovite “Ghost Fortresses” and Muscovite Ways of Defining Loyalties in the North Caucasus.....	148
3.2 Out of the Ashes, Tsar’s Prestige Born Again: Revival of Muscovite Power in Kabarda.....	157
3.3 Once and For All: The Muscovite Attempts at Dominating Daghestan and the Denouement of the Imperial Rivalry in the North Caucasus.....	182
Chapter 4: Ottoman and Muscovite Imperial Policies in the North Caucasus Compared.....	194
4.1 An overview and comparison of Ottoman Northern Policy and Muscovite Steppe Policy.....	196
4.2 Imperial Policies and the North Caucasus: Beginnings of the Rivalry in the Borderlands	221
4.2.1 Reflections on Ottoman Northern Policy in the North Caucasus.....	221

4.2.2 Reflections on Muscovite Steppe Policy in the North Caucasus.....	233
Chapter 5: The View from the North Caucasus: A Tale of Five Rulers from the Region.....	243
5.1 Solokh of Kabarda.....	245
5.2 Kansavuk and Sibok of the Janey Adyghes.....	260
5.3 Urus of the Greater Nogays.....	264
5.4 Alexander II of the Kakheti Kingdom.....	272
Conclusion.....	277
Appendix I: Selected Ottoman Documents from the <i>Mühimme Defters</i>	290
Appendix II: Selected Muscovite Documents from the Archives of the Posol'skii Prikaz.....	303
Chronology.....	316
Maps.....	320
Glossary.....	322
Bibliography.....	326

List of Appendices

Appendix I: Selected Ottoman Documents from the <i>Mühimme Defters</i>	290
I-A Ottoman version of Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570.....	290
I-B Letters and orders from the Porte regarding plans for construction of two fortresses in the North Caucasus.....	295
I-C Imperial Letter to the Shamkhal of Daghestan dated 7 Şa'bân 1002/28 April 1594.....	300
Appendix II: Selected Muscovite Documents from the Archives of the Posol'skii Prikaz.....	303
II-A Posol'skii Prikaz translation of Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570.....	303
II-B Sokullu Mehmed Pasha's discussion with Muscovite envoy Ivan Novosiltsev regarding the route that the envoy took in order to go to Istanbul from Moscow and the status of and situation in Astrakhan, 1570	308
II-C <i>Shert'</i> signed in 1588 by Kabardinian Mamstriuk Kniaz, Kudenek Mirza, and others	311

INTRODUCTION

*Прощай, немытая Россия,
Страна рабов, страна господ,
И вы, мундиры голубые,
И ты, им преданный народ.
Быть может, за стеной Кавказа
Сокроюсь от твоих пашей,
От их всевидящего глаза,
От их всеслышающих ушей.
М. Lermontov (1840)**

Many people have been fascinated for the first time with the North Caucasus—the variety and beauty of its landscapes and its unique social and political structures—upon reading famous Russian classics of prose or poetry by Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Lermontov, or Alexander Pushkin. The region as told by these writers has inspired writers, artists, and film makers for generations. In addition to these, the recent war in Chechnya following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the ongoing conflicts in the region have increased interest in the region. However, if one wants to read more about the North Caucasus, especially the history of the region in the early modern period, it is certain that she/he will realize the dearth of scholarly works on the early modern history of the region and its peoples. As such, it can be stated that the history of the North Caucasus and of its local peoples and polities, especially

* Mikhail Lermontov, *Sobranie Sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), 1:524. Its literal translation by Anatoly Liberman in his *Mikhail Lermontov: Major Poetical Works* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 556 is as follows:

*Farewell, unwashed Russia,
land of slaves, land of lords,
and you, blue uniforms,
and you, people, obedient to them.
Perhaps beyond the ridge of Caucasus
I will hide from your pashas,
from their all-seeing eye,
from their all-hearing ears.*

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has still not received adequate academic attention either within the historiographies of the Ottoman Empire and of Muscovy/the Russian Empire, or as a separate area of interest. Existing histories of the region and its peoples have been written from rather nationalist or ideological perspectives and are not helpful for understanding from a more objective point of view what actually happened in the region. For this reason, the early modern history of the North Caucasus and its relations with the surrounding imperial powers is still in need of more objective and scholarly study.

The present dissertation proposes to offer a systematic study of Ottoman northern and Muscovite steppe policies, their applications and alterations in the North Caucasus in addition to explaining how local North Caucasus rulers responded to these policies, what their own policies and strategies were, and how their own political structures were affected by the imperial rivalry in the region. The second half of the sixteenth century was a pivotal period in the history of the region, a period during which Ottoman and Muscovite presence and sway underwent several extreme and even unexpected shifts as these ambitions of two asymmetric powers—the Ottomans an established “super power” and the Muscovites a rising power—became entangled for the first time.

Sources

To provide a thorough, multi-source study of the imperial policies and history of the North Caucasus, this study relies mostly on the primary sources from the Turkish and Russian archives as well as the sixteenth-century chronicles. In terms of archival sources, the Ottoman archives’ collection of the *mühimme defterleri* and the Muscovite compilations of *posol’skie knigi* contain invaluable information regarding the policies of the Ottoman Empire

and Muscovy respectively and relations of these imperial powers with the local peoples of the North Caucasus.

The *mühimme defterleri* (lit., “registers of important affairs”) are registers of *hükms* (orders) concerning domestic and international affairs in their political, social, and military dimensions. There are 263 of these defters and they form the Mühimme Defterleri fond (*tasnif*) at the Ottoman Archives of the Office of the Prime Minister (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, henceforth BOA). Additional *mühimmes* are catalogued under the designation Mühimme Zeyli. Available *mühimme* registers cover a time period of approximately 350 years between 1544 and 1905.¹

Compared to the later centuries, *mühimmes* from the sixteenth century are more comprehensive in terms of the range of issues that they cover.² Suraiya Faroqhi states that the sixteenth and seventeenth century *mühimme* registers encompassed most of the affairs of the Ottoman state.³ Covering more than three centuries and containing invaluable information on the many aspects of the functioning of the Ottoman Empire, *mühimme* registers are definitely one of the most important series in the Ottoman archives.

The meetings at the Imperial Council, where the decisions were taken, were held in the presence of the grand vizier, other viziers at the Porte, the *kadiaskers* of Anatolia and

¹ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi rehberi*, ed. Hacı Osman Yıldırım, Nazım Yılmaz, and Yusuf İhsan Genç (Istanbul: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2000). In addition to these, there are two seventeenth-century *mühimme defters* found in the Kamil Kepeci fond of the Ottoman archives.

² Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Une source inédite pour l’histoire de la Russie au XVI^e siècle: Les registres des ‘Mühimme Defterleri’ des Archives du Baş-Vekâlet,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 8 (1967): 335-43, esp. 335.

³ Suraiya Faroqhi, “Mühimme Defterleri,” *EF*, 7: 471.

Rumelia, the *defterdar*, and the *nişancı*. All of the decisions were to be approved by the Ottoman sultan before they were written as imperial orders (*hükms*) and sent out to their addressed. Records in *mühimme* registers are generally considered to be copies of the imperial orders dispatched to the Ottoman officials or foreign rulers. However, there is a discussion among the Ottomanists whether these records are the copies of the orders that were actually dispatched or copies of drafts, not necessary the dispatched version of the *hükms*. Uriel Heyd says that the majority of these records were not drafts.⁴ Faroqhi and Mübahat Kütükoğlu agree with Heyd. They add that some of the *mühimme* records, however, are clearly drafts because corrections were made on them.⁵ Important clue is that drafts (*müsvedde*) on small pieces of paper are attached next to *mühimme* entries. This suggests that drafts may have been written on separate slips of paper with notes added by various officials.⁶ After necessary corrections were made on these papers, their content was entered into *mühimme defterleri*.⁷ Heyd thinks that the note *yazıldı* (lit., “it was written”) at the top of an entry indicates that final forms of the orders were drawn after their registration in the *mühimme defterleri* and *yazıldı* means that a specific order was written based on the *mühimme* record and sent out. Thus probably the majority of records in *mühimmes* were copies of the final drafts but not the final text. However, as Heyd further claims, this fact does not necessarily diminish the authenticity of these records. Clearly most of these entries in a *mühimme defter* were dispatched, as some entries have a note indicating that they were

⁴ Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine, 1552-1615: A Study of the Firman according to the Mühimme Defteri* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 23.

⁵ Faroqhi, “Mühimme Defterleri,” 7:470-71; Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, “Mühimme defterlerindeki muamele kayıtları üzerine,” in *Tarih boyunca paleografya ve diplomatik semineri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1988), 104-05.

⁶ Kütükoğlu, “Mühimme Defterlerindeki,” 104.

⁷ Heyd, *Ottoman Documents*, 23.

not sent out.⁸ It is true that the final text of the order were different in terms of wording and orthography. Yet, we know that in the cases that there was an important difference between the text in the *mühimme* and final form, the same order was entered again into the *mühimme* or corrections were made alongside the same entry.⁹ It should be noted here that these differences were not related to the content but to the language and wording.¹⁰ In most cases there was no or no significant difference between the texts of the *mühimme* entry and final *hükm*. Moreover, there were instances in which orders were recorded in the *defter*s after the final copy was made or after they were dispatched.¹¹ Cancellation of an order that was registered in the *mühimme defterleri* was also possible, but only with the approval of the sultan that was given in the form of a written order to the *nişancı*.¹²

The final forms of the orders that were sent to the provinces or foreign rulers can sometimes be found in local or foreign archives.¹³ However, there are also examples of some orders sent to the provinces or foreign rulers that have been discovered in local or foreign archives cannot be found in the available collection of *mühimme defterleri*.¹⁴ Moreover,

⁸ Ibid., 24

⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25

¹¹ Ibid., 27-28

¹² *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi rehberi*, 61.

¹³ Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570 (in Muscovite translation) in Rossiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (henceforth RGADA), *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, 56b-59a.

¹⁴ For example, a letter sent in 1583 by Ottoman Sultan Murad III to Ivan IV (in Muscovite translation) is found in RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, 248b-249b. The same letter cannot be found in the *mühimme* registers. Moreover, Smirnov lists 37 letters from the Ottoman sultan to the tsar between 1497-1667 found in the Russian archives. Most of these letters cannot be found in the *mühimme* records. See N. A. Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv.*, Uchanie zapiski, vyp. 94 (Moscow: Moskovskogo Gosudarsvennogo Universiteta, 1946), 42.

some of these *defters* have been lost as we understand from the fact that there are no *mühimmes* for some years. Some of these losses might have been due to the fact that the grand viziers took some *mühimme* registers with them during campaigns or other Ottoman officials are known to leave a part of these registers in different locales where they served.¹⁵

The recording of the dates of the orders in the *mühimme* has also been a topic of discussion. Most of the sixteenth century registers indicate a date in a heading written above the entry. It is not exactly clear whether these dates refer to — the date of the decision, the date of recording, or the date of dispatch of the final order. İsmail Uzunçarşılı thinks that these dates indicate days on which the decisions were taken at the Imperial Council.¹⁶ However, based on the fact that the Imperial Council met four days a week on Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays, Heyd thinks that these dates were the dates of registration of the final drafts in the *mühimmes* because there were orders entered on different days.¹⁷ Kütükoğlu does not agree with Heyd and thinks that dates were sometimes registered incorrectly by scribes and those dates were more likely to indicate days on which the council gathered.¹⁸ It should be also added that generally orders in a defter follow a chronological sequence.¹⁹

¹⁵ Faroqhi provides an example entry dated 1738-9 which states that registers of the last 30 years were to be taken to the front. Moreover, the oldest registers were left in Edirne and the ones from the middle decade of the sixteenth century were left in Niş. See Faroqhi, “Mühimme Defterleri,” 7:470; Heyd, *Ottoman Documents*, 4-5.

¹⁶ İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin merkez ve bahriye teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1948), 80-81.

¹⁷ Heyd, *Ottoman Documents*, 26.

¹⁸ Kütükoğlu, “Mühimme defterlerindeki,” 100-02.

¹⁹ Faroqhi, “Mühimme Defterleri,” 7: 471; Heyd, *Ottoman Documents*, 4-5.

It should be also added that the records in *mühimme* entries are abridged versions of the orders. Most of the time, honorifics of addressees and formulas of corroboration at the end were left out of *mühimme* entries. However, they always contain the full description of the issue and what was expected from the addressees. A typical record in a *mühimme defter* begins with the addressee's function, sometimes his name and rank, and the formula *hüküm ki*. This part is followed by the narration (*narratio, iblag*) containing a summary of the incoming reports, petitions or letters and the description of the circumstances that led to the writing of the order. Most of the time, the Ottoman chancery copied word for word entire passages from the incoming reports, petitions and letters.²⁰ The narration part ends with the formula *buyurdum ki*. The actual order, containing measures to be taken (*dispositio*), follows. The record ends with the formulas of corroboration and promulgation in which the importance of the matter is stressed and the addressees are commanded to carry out the order without delay (*sanctio-comminatio, tekid*).

In spite of the above mentioned problematic nature of the *mühimmes*, these registers contain invaluable information on the administrative and military structure of the Ottoman Empire, their functions, legal statuses, and on the political and military history of the neighboring countries including those in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, North Africa, and Eastern and Central Europe.

It should also be noted that eight *defter*s so far has been published by the Ottoman Archives.²¹ These publications contain full transcriptions, modern Turkish summary, and an

²⁰ Heyd, *Ottoman Documents*, 8.

²¹ 3 numaralı *mühimme defteri*, 966-968/1558-1560, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1993); 5 numaralı *mühimme defteri*, 973/1565, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara:

index for each defter. Moreover, Halil Sahillioğlu published a *defter* from the Archives of Topkapı which covers the years of 1544/1545.²² In addition to these, two more *defters* were published by Mehmet Ali Ünal and Hikmet Ülker.²³

The Muscovite sources used in this dissertation are mostly documents contained in the *posol'skie knigi* (lit., “ambassadorial books”) preserved in the Russian State Archives of the Ancient Acts (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov, henceforth RGADA). This archive is home to documents dating back to the earliest periods of Eastern Slavic history. It contains approximately 1600 fonds covering a period from the eleventh to the nineteenth century.²⁴ *Posol'skie knigi* were compiled by the Posol'skii Prikaz (lit., “ambassadorial office”), which was the office of the Muscovite government responsible for dealing with external affairs. Its jurisdiction included sending and receiving embassies and establishing and maintaining commercial relations with foreign governments. It was created in Muscovy in the early years of the second half of the sixteenth century.²⁵

Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1994); 6 numaralı mühimme defteri, 972/1564-1565, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1995); 7 numaralı mühimme defteri 975-976 / 1567-1569, ed. Murat Şenel et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1997); 12 numaralı mühimme defteri, 978-979/1570-1572, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996); 82 numaralı mühimme defteri, 1026-1027/1617-1618, ed. Hacı Osman Yıldırım et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2000); 83 numaralı mühimme defteri, 1036-1037/1626-1628, ed. Hacı Osman Yıldırım et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001); 85 numaralı mühimme defteri, 1040-1041/1630-1631, ed. Hacı Osman Yıldırım et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2002).

²² Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H.951-952 tarihli ve E-12321 numaralı mühimme defteri, ed. Halil Sahillioğlu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002).

²³ Mühimme defteri 44, ed. Mehmet A. Ünal (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1995); Sultanın emir defteri, 51 numaralı mühimme defteri, ed. Hikmet Ülker (Istanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı, 2003).

²⁴ Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the USSR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 153-34; Olga E. Glagoleva, *Working with Russian Archival Documents* (Toronto: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, 1998), 101.

²⁵ N. M. Rogozhin, *Posol'skii prikaz: Kolybel' rossiiskoi diplomatii* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnesheniia, 2003), 53. For a comprehensive list of *posol'skie knigi* preserved at the Russian State Archives of the Ancient Acts, see Rogozhin, *Posol'skii prikaz*, 333-52.

It has been suggested that the Muscovite diplomatic traditions stemmed from the Golden Horde and certainly the diplomatic language used by the Posol'skii Prikaz reflects this fact.²⁶ In addition to the language used in documents, the Muscovites used scrolls (*stolbtsy*), documents sewn together in rolls, which had been used by the Golden Horde and other Turkic khanates in Central Asia.²⁷ These scrolls were kept in boxes or chests.²⁸ However, the use of books (*knigi*) to organize and preserve the diplomatic documents became more common in Muscovy during the reign of Ivan III (r. 1462-1505).²⁹

There were certain different groups of documents prepared for Muscovite missions. Some of them were written by the Posol'skii Prikaz and some by the envoys. The Posol'skii Prikaz prepared *pamiat'* (lit., "memorandum") and *nakaz* (lit. "instruction") documents for the envoy. Memorandums included speeches to be given at the courts of foreign rulers and letters to foreign rulers or high officials. These were prepared in detail and in line with the objectives of an embassy. Envoys were also to follow instructions. There were some general instructions given to more or less all the envoys. For example, envoys were allowed to reveal their mission only to the ruler of the country they visited. They were not allowed to speak if there were other envoys from other rulers at the reception. Moreover, tsar's envoys were to be received only in certain places. In addition to such general instructions, the envoys could be given other instructions specifically prepared for a given embassy. These instructions

²⁶ Edward Louis Keenan, "Muscovy and Kazan: Some Introductory Remarks on the Patterns of Steppe Diplomacy," *Slavic Review* 26 (1967): 548-58, esp. 550; and Edward Louis Keenan, "Yarlík of Axmed Khan to Ivan III: A New Reading," *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 11 (1967): 32-47.

²⁷ Charles Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (London: Tauris, 1987), 92.

²⁸ Robert M. Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice in the Reign of Ivan III* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 16.

²⁹ Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice*, 18.

could delve into the rather minute detail, for example, providing the envoy with a set of answers to give to various questions that might be posed to him by his hosts. Thus *pamiat* and *nakaz* are written for each embassy in Moscow by the officials of the Posol'skii Prikaz. These documents were prepared based on the self-image of the Muscovite tsar, Muscovite customs, and assumptions of these officials about the foreign rulers and their lands.

Ambassadorial reports (*stateinye spiski*, lit., “article lists”), which are also a part of the *posol'skie knigi*, are extremely valuable sources for historians as the Muscovite envoys prepared these reports in rather exact and often vivid detail. Moreover, these reports contain documents including speeches to be delivered to foreign rulers and the reactions of foreign rulers or other high ranking officers.³⁰ These reports also include information on Muscovite envoys' travel routes from Moscow to their destination and back. Envoys specifically noted chiefs, rulers, and other important personalities they came across and negotiated with during their travels, their conversations and reception at their destination, negotiations with foreign government officials, and speeches. These reports were written in daybook form and provided the Muscovite government with a day-to-day record of the embassy.³¹ Therefore, the *posol'skie knigi* and specifically the ambassadorial reports are very significant sources not only for understanding Muscovite foreign policy and its functioning, but also for gathering factual information on the political and social structure of the countries where the envoys were sent and of the politics on the envoys' routes.

In terms of the relations of Muscovy with the Ottoman Empire and the Crimea, which is a core aspect of the present dissertation, the Posol'skii Prikaz produced the most important

³⁰ Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practise*, 18.

³¹ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 31-33.

documents.³² Posol'skii Prikaz documents are further classified by country or region including the Crimean Khanate (*Krymskie dela*, "Crimean Dossiers") and the Ottoman Empire (*Turetskie dela*, "Turkish Dossiers"). Moreover, documents are preserved in chronological order within the framework of the above mentioned classification. Reports of Muscovite envoys to the Porte and to the Crimean khan, letters and envoys from the sultan and the khan, and other documents related to the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate are found in these fonds. There are three *knigi* preserved under the title *Turetskie dela* (fond no. 89) for the second half of the sixteenth century. And there are 21 *knigi* that are catalogued under the title *Krymskie dela* (fond no. 123) for the same period.³³ Two books that are catalogued under fond no. 89 (*Turetskie dela*) are especially important for information on Muscovite and Ottoman designs and negotiations on the status and affairs of the North Caucasus. *Turetskie dela*, kniga no. 2 contains documentation of the embassy of Ivan Novosiltsev to the Porte in 1570 and Novosiltsev's ambassadorial report giving detailed information on his negotiations at the Porte. It also has the documentation for the embassies of Andrei Kuzminskii in 1571 and Boris Blagovo in 1584. *Turetskie dela*, kniga no. 3 has documents for the embassy of Grigorii Nashchokin in 1592-3 and the ambassadorial report of Nashchokin. Important books of the fond for the Crimean affairs (fond no. 123) for the second half of the sixteenth century are *Krymskie dela*, *knigi* 13, 14, 15, and 16 which have documentations for ambassadorial affairs of A. F. Nagov and negotiations between Devlet Girey and Ivan IV that are partly related to North Caucasus affairs.

³² Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 29.

³³ N. M. Rogozhin, *Posol'skie knigi Rossii kontsa XV-nachala XVII vv.* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii, 1994), 181. Note that *Turetskie dela* and *Krymskie dela* are the traditional names for these collections. Officially these two fonds are known respectively as *Snosheniia Rossii s Turtsiei* ("Relations of Russia with Turkey") and *Snosheniia Rossii s Krymom* ("Relations of Russia with the Crimea").

Comparing the tone of the correspondence between Muscovy and Crimea and Muscovy and the Porte and the contents of instructions for the embassies, Robert M. Croskey notes an interesting difference. He states, beginning with the reign of Ivan III, the Muscovites tried to establish their relations with the Ottomans on the same basis as their relations with Poland and other western powers. For this reason, the Muscovites tried to avoid using subservient phrases that were common in tsar's letters and embassies to the Crimean khan such as "and I petition you."³⁴

Archival documents on the relations of the local principalities and rulers in the Caucasus with the Muscovite State were compiled and published as early as 1889 by Sergei L. Belokurov in his monumental *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613* (Relations of Russia with the Caucasus: Materials compiled from the Moscow Main Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1578-1613). It contains important documents related to the North Caucasus rulers and reports of Muscovite envoys on missions to the Georgian Kingdoms.³⁵ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv* (Kabardinian-Russian relations in the 16th-18th centuries) was published as a contribution to the celebrations of "the four hundredth anniversary of the voluntary adherence of Kabarda to Russia" in 1957. It was published in two volumes, which present significant primary documents for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries related to the relations of the Kabardinian rulers with Muscovy and the Russian

³⁴ Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice*, 36, 62; Robert Croskey, "The Diplomatic Forms of Ivan III's Relationship with the Crimean Khan," *Slavic Review* 43 (1984): 257-69.

³⁵ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889).

Empire.³⁶ These two document publications contain the most important Muscovite documents on the early modern history of the North Caucasus including documents from the *Kabardinskie dela* (Kabardinian Dossiers).

Studies

The early modern history of the Caucasus in general—let alone the northern part of it—has not been studied adequately. Certainly the number of western scholars working on the North Caucasus in the early modern period and producing works in western languages remains very low compared to those interested in Ottoman, Muscovite or Safavid histories as they relate to other geographical areas or those interested in the post-Soviet history and status of the region. On the other hand, the Russian and Turkish historians who have written on this subject tend to narrate or interpret the history of the North Caucasus from a nationalist point of view as if North Caucasus rulers were unreservedly ready to submit to the Muscovite tsar or Ottoman sultan. Such an approach from historians, ignoring perspectives of the local peoples, has so far created problems for understanding the history of the region objectively. Moreover, recent or current ethnic and religious conflicts among local peoples and some ethnic groups' struggles for independence against the Russian Federation still affect the North Caucasus. The current situation of the region and the shortcomings of the contemporary scholarship have led to an increase in the demand for more objective and scholarly studies of the history of the Caucasus in general and, more specifically of the North Caucasus.

³⁶ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957).

The quest for domination over the North Caucasus was eventually realized by the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the North Caucasus became a part of the Soviet Union and was often arbitrarily divided into several autonomous republics and regions by Soviet politicians in Moscow without the consent of the local populations. Today the North Caucasus remains a part of the Russian Federation, notwithstanding the gruesome wars in the region such as those wars in Chechnya and Ossetia, which in the decades following the break-up of the Soviet Union have showed the world conflicts reminiscent of struggles of the “freedom-loving” local peoples in the North Caucasus against the Tsarist armies in the nineteenth century.

As it will be obvious in this dissertation, the four hundredth anniversary of the so-called voluntary annexation of Kabarda was a deliberate distortion of the historical facts by the Soviet policy makers and historians. Aytek Namitok heavily criticized this thesis in his article entitled “The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia,” in which he rejects the argument that 1557 constitutes the date of annexation of Kabarda to Russia. Namitok says it was the date that several of the Kabardinian chiefs offered their allegiance to the Muscovite tsar and they did not have any right to speak on behalf of all Kabardinian chiefs because there was no central authority and each chief could act independently.³⁷ N. A. Smirnov, in his *Rossiia i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv.* (Russia and Turkey in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries), briefly mentions the role of the North Caucasus and some of its local rulers in the Ottoman-Muscovite rivalry.³⁸ Smirnov also wrote two more monographs with regards to the Muscovite/Russian policies in the Caucasus. *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze v 16-19 vekakh* (The

³⁷ Aytek Namitok, “The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia,” *Caucasian Review* 2 (1956): 17-28.

³⁸ Smirnov, *Rossiia i Turtsiia*.

Russian policy in the Caucasus in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries) covers the objectives of Muscovy and the Russian Empire in the region.³⁹ His other monograph is *Kabardinskii vopros v russko-turetskikh otnosheniakh XVI- XVIII vv.* (The Kabardinian question in Russo-Turkish relations, sixteenth-eighteenth centuries). The latter, however, mostly focuses on the later centuries.⁴⁰ While Smirnov's presentation and interpretation of the events are stridently anti-Turkish, he extensively uses Posol'skii Prikaz archival materials and that is why his works have considerable value. Smirnov was also one of the editors of a collective monograph published in 1957 to mark the four hundredth anniversary of the events of 1557 entitled *Istoriia Kabardy, s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (The history of Kabarda from ancient times until the present day). As its title suggests, this is a very general book and contains only very cursory information on the sixteenth century.⁴¹ E. N. Kusheva's "Politika russkogo gosudartsva na severnom Kavkaze v 1552-1572 gg." (The policy of the Russian government in the North Caucasus, 1552-1572) and *Narody severnogo Kavkaza i ikh sviazi s Rossiei* (The peoples of the North Caucasus and their relations with Russia) provide a more or less well-written historical narrative for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries largely based on the Muscovite archival sources including the same Posol'skii Prikaz materials presented in the works of N. A. Smirnov and Muscovite chronicles. In contrast to Smirnov's works, however, Kusheva utilizes Ottoman chronicles written in the sixteenth and

³⁹ N. A. Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze v 16-19 vekakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsialno-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1958).

⁴⁰ N. A. Smirnov, *Kabardinskii vopros v russko-turetskikh otnosheniakh XVI-XVIII vv.* (Nalchik: Kabardinskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1948).

⁴¹ N. A. Smirnov, ed., *Istoriia Kabardy s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1957).

seventeenth centuries and some secondary sources written in French and German.⁴² For this reason, although she follows Smirnov's narrative, Kusheva avoids the anti-Turkish approach that is visible in Smirnov's works. Apart from these, D. M. Atayev's *Istoriia Dagestana* (The history of Daghestan) published in 1967 is a general history of Daghestan. It does not offer new interpretations but remains a good reference book.⁴³ B. B. Piotrovskii's *Istoriia narodov Severnogo Kavkaza s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVIII v.* (The history of the peoples of the North Caucasus from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century) covers the history of the region from very early times. As for the sixteenth century, Piotrovskii repeats Smirnov and other Soviet historians.⁴⁴

The ideological motivation for applauding and justifying Russia's annexation of the region is no secret. The Soviets wanted to create a history through which the peoples of the North Caucasus could associate themselves with the system as an integral part of the Russian Empire/Soviet Union. This was a deliberate policy and for this reason, histories of smaller peoples were promoted during the Soviet period. What was presented in these histories were struggles of the peoples of the North Caucasus to free themselves from foreign yokes—especially from Ottoman or Tatar domination—with of course the help of the Muscovite State/Russian Empire that were ready to be their saviour and offer room for them among the imperial elites.

⁴² E. N. Kusheva, "Politika Russkogo gosudartstva na Severnom Kavkaze v 1552-1572 gg," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 34, (1950): 236-287; *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh sviazi s Rossiei: Vtoraia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1958).

⁴³ D. M. Ataev et. al, *Istoriia Dagestana*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Glavnaia redaktsiia vostochnoi literatury, 1967).

⁴⁴ B. B. Piotrovskii, *Istoriia narodov Severnogo Kavkaza s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVIII v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988).

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the uprising in Chechnya aimed at securing independence, the North Caucasus became one of the main areas of concern among the Russian Federation's politicians and scholars. With the end of Soviet censorship and political pressures, historians from the North Caucasus started to write their own histories that are more objective in their approach to the imperial rivalry over the region that began in the second half of the sixteenth century. K. F. Dzamikhov authored *Adygi v politike Rossii na Kavkaze: 1550-e-nachalo 1770-kh gg.* (The Adyghe in the policy of Russia on the Caucasus: from the 1550s until the beginning of the 1770s) in 2001 in which he is able to present a history of the region in a different light, namely from a more objective perspective. His chapter 2 entitled "Historical, territorial and demographic context of Adyghe-Russian relation" is specifically important in terms of his interpretation of the early relations between the Circassians and the Muscovites in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He uses the same Muscovite Posol'skii Prikaz sources as the Soviet historians but he does not agree that the Muscovites were "invited" to take over the Circassian lands by the Circassian chiefs.⁴⁵ Another book on the Russian policy in the Caucasus, however, focusing mostly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is Vladimir Degoev, *Bolshaia igra na Kavkaze: Istoriia i sovremennost* (The great game in the Caucasus: history and the present).⁴⁶ Being Circassian himself, Amjad Jaimoukha produced a general, perhaps at times superficial, yet truly a much needed history of the Circassian tribes from their very earliest history until our day that has valuable information on the social and political customs of the Circassians and their interactions with the empires surrounding the region. Jaimoukha approaches the imperial

⁴⁵ K. F. Dzamikhov, *Adygi v politike Rossii na Kavkaze, 1550-e-nachalo 1770-kh gg.* (Nalchik: El-Fa, 2001).

⁴⁶ Vladimir Degoev, *Bolshaia igra na Kavkaze: Istoriia i sovremennost* (Moscow: Russkaia panorama, 2001).

rivalry from quite an open point of view as opposed to presenting the foregone conclusion that is the North Caucasus rulers voluntarily submitted to the Muscovite tsar or that the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars were the main aggressors.⁴⁷ Related to the North Caucasus to an extent is *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (The history of the Nogay horde) by V.V. Trepavlov. His work covers most of the Muscovite primary sources on the Nogays including ambassadorial reports written by envoys sent to the Nogays, Crimean Khanate, Ottoman Empire, and correspondence between Moscow and Astrakhan. Trepavlov also touches upon the relations of the Nogay hordes (Greater and Lesser) with the North Caucasus, Muscovy, Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire in a very scholarly and objective manner.⁴⁸

Although, the break-up of the Soviet Union has facilitated more objective scholarship on the history of the North Caucasus, nationalist and/or imperial perceptions and interpretations have not faded away completely. Far from that an edited volume on some contemporary historical questions relating to the Caucasus was published in 2000. One of the sections of this volume is entitled “Russia’s southern outpost: together with the mountaineers against the foreign invaders” where salvation of the local North Caucasus peoples from the foreign oppression by the Russian Empire is laid out to the reader. One of the questions in this section is “How Russia defended the Mountaineers from Turkish aggression?”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). Other general histories on the North Caucasus that are published after 1991 are B. K. Malbakhov, *Kabarda na etapakh politicheskoi istorii* (Moscow: Pomatur, 2002); K. H. Unezhev, *Istoriia Kabardy i Balkarii* (Nalchik: El-Fa, 2005); S. N. Beituganov, *Kabarda: Istoriia i familii* (Nalchik: Elbrus, 2007); B. K. Malbakhov, *Kabarda na etapakh politicheskoi istorii* (Moscow: Pomatur, 2002); B. G. Aliev and M. K. Umakhanov, *Istoricheskaia geografiia Dagestana, XVII-nach. XIX v.* (Mahachkala: Institut istorii, arkhologii i etnografii Dagestanskogo nauchnogo tsentra RAN, 2001); Aliev and Umakhanov, *Dagestan v XV-XVI vv.: Voprosy istoricheskoi geografii* (Mahachkala: Institut istorii, arkhologii i etnografii Dagestanskogo nauchnogo tsentra RAN, 2004).

⁴⁸ V. V. Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2002).

⁴⁹ V. I. Desiaterik and Vad. V. Dementev, eds., *Kavkaz v serdtse Rossii: na voprosy sovremennosti otvety ishchem v istorii* (Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2000).

On the other hand, works produced during the Cold War by Turkish historians on the history of the North Caucasus or the Muscovite-Ottoman rivalry are not free from prejudices analogous to those in Soviet/Russian publications. In an era when Russian was considered the language of “the Communists” and learners of the Russian language even if for scholarly purposes, in Turkey could be persecuted, it is hard to imagine that there would be a sufficient number of historians able to consult studies in Russian, not to mention Muscovite or imperial Russian sources. This led to a one-sided scholarship based mostly on non-Russian primary and secondary sources and at that mostly Ottoman and Turkish. From the Turkish point of view, the history of the North Caucasus is a history of Russian aggression against the local peoples and tribes who strove to be under Crimean/Ottoman/Turkish rule. Mass migrations of the Circassians and other North Caucasus peoples to the Ottoman Empire escaping the persecutions and atrocities of the Tsarist armies that started in the nineteenth century also rendered a psychological impact on the Turkish people and their attitude towards the history of the North Caucasus and today’s events there. M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu’s *Osmanlıların Kafkas-ellerini fethi* (The Ottoman conquest of the Caucasus)⁵⁰ and Cemal Gökçe’s *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kafkasya siyaseti* (The Caucasus and the Ottoman Policy of the Caucasus)⁵¹ contain numerous examples of such an approach. As for the North Caucasus, these authors maintain that the local Circassian and Daghestani peoples had been under the legitimate sovereignty of the Crimean khan and thus of the Ottoman sultan. Moreover, Muslim local peoples also supposedly preferred to live under the rule of the Ottoman Porte. Such a statement is a result of the Ottoman/Crimean argument frequently reiterated in their

⁵⁰ M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlıların Kafkas ellerini fethi (1451-1590)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992).

⁵¹ Cemal Gökçe, *Kafkasya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kafkasya siyaseti* (İstanbul: Has Kutulmuş Matbaası, 1979).

documents and put forth in the negotiations with the Muscovites that the Daghestanis and Circassians were subjects of the Porte because they were Muslims. However, as was the case with Smirnov's and Kusheva's works in relation to Muscovite sources, thanks to their use of in this case Ottoman archival materials and chronicles, Kırzioğlu's and Gökçe's works should be consulted by historians interested in the history of the Caucasus. Kırzioğlu uses most of the *mühimme defterleri* and chronicles related to the history of the Caucasus. However, his narrative focuses on the Ottoman activities in the South Caucasus against the Safavids.

Apart from these, there are many academic and non-academic histories of the North Caucasus written by intellectuals belonging to émigré groups from the Caucasus, especially those of the Circassian origin. They tend to see the history of the region as a history of Russian penetration and destruction of their local culture and political and social structures.⁵² In such studies, the Russian Empire appears as the enemy of the local peoples who were eventually forced to leave their homelands and settled in a welcoming Ottoman Empire. Again, one should keep in mind that Turkish historians and others who studied the North Caucasus during the Cold War were unable to work in Soviet archives and had little or no knowledge of studies by the Soviet historians. Or they simply rejected the claims of the Soviet historians for ideological rather than scholarly reasons. However, there were exceptions to this. Thus, Zeki Velidi Togan, Halil İnalcık, Akdes Nimet Kurat, and İlber Ortaylı paved the way for a change in Turkish historiography.⁵³ Kurat and Togan, who knew

⁵² See for example, Şerafettin Terim, *Kafkas tarihinde Abazalar ve Çerkeslik mefhumu* (Istanbul: Minnetoğlu Kitabevi, 1976); Kadircan Kaflı, *Şimali Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Vakıf, 1942).

⁵³ See Halil İnalcık, "Power Relations between Russia, the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature," *Turco-Tatar Past Soviet Present: Studies Presented to Alexandre Benningsen*, ed. Ch. Lemerrier-

Russian, generally used secondary sources in Russian or published Muscovite/Russian documents as during the Cold War it was impossible for them to work in the Soviet archives. Ortaylı was able to work in the Russian archives only after the break-up of the Soviet Union. There he did research on the Muscovite copies of the letters of the Ottoman sultans sent to the tsars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁴ İnalçık is known to have utilized published primary and secondary sources in Russian language for his works. These historians opened the door for a better utilization of Russian sources on the history of Turkey. Moreover, in recent decades İnalçık and Ortaylı have been active in promoting the study of Russian language and history in Turkey.

The number of historians and graduate students who know Russian and/or other Slavic languages has been increasing since the end of the Cold War. The knowledge of Russian historical literature and sources has brought a new dimension to historical studies in Turkey related to the Caucasus (including its northern part). Being able to consult archival sources, chronicles, and books in the Russian language, many from the new generation of historians in Turkey try to avoid demonizing Muscovy/the Russian Empire or Russians on every occasion regarding the events in the Caucasus or, for that matter, in relation to events in the Balkans that resulted in Ottoman defeats and losses of territories.

Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, and E. Wimbush (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 175-215 and his "Osmanlı-Rus rekabetinin menşei ve Don-Volga kanalı teşebbüsü (1569)," *Belleten* 12 (1948): 349-402, for its English version, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and the Don-Volga Canal (1569)," *Annales de l'Université d'Ankara* 1 (1947): 47-110; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1966), and *Rusya tarihi: Başlangıcından 1917'ye kadar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999); A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili Türkistan ve yakın tarihi* (Istanbul: Güven Basımevi, 1947); İlber Ortaylı, *Ottoman Studies* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2004).

⁵⁴ He obtained copies of some of the Muscovite translations of letters sent by the Ottoman sultans to the Muscovite tsars between the years of 1612-1892. Copies of these archival documents are classified in the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry as Fond no. YB. (1): Yabancı Arşiv, Rusya Federasyonu Arşivindeki Osmanlı Dönemine Aid Belgeler (Foreign Archive, Documents Related to the Ottoman Period in the Archives of the Russian Federation). *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi rehberi*, 443, 507.

Each year many new monographs and other studies are being published in Turkish on the history of the North Caucasus. The majority of the historians in Turkey working on the history of the Caucasus are still émigrés or their descendants from the Caucasus. Among them are M. S. Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (The Ottoman state and the Caucasus)⁵⁵ and Mustafa Aydın, *Üç büyük gücün çatışma alanı Kafkasya* (The Caucasus: The area of conflict for three great powers).⁵⁶ Although prejudices against the Russian involvements in the North Caucasus are still present in these books, it has become a growing trend to use secondary sources in Russian in addition to Turkish ones. Bilge consults most of the available *mühimme defterleri*, *tahrir defterleri* (tax registers), chronicles, and travelers' accounts. However, he focuses on the eighteenth century struggles of the North Caucasus people against the Russian Empire. Lastly, there is much valuable information in Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe: 1475-1600* (Kefe under the Ottomans: 1475-1600) in terms of Öztürk's utilization of primary Ottoman sources including *mühimme defterleri*, *tahrir defterleri*, and chronicles. Öztürk provides a very detailed economic and social history of Ottoman Kefe with references to the Muscovite policies in the region. He also gives much information on the revenues of Kefe.⁵⁷

So far Western historiography has paid little attention to the lands and peoples of the North Caucasus. Exceptions to this are the French historians Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, Marie Bennigsen Broxup, and Alexandre Bennigsen. Although they use both Ottoman and

⁵⁵ M. S. Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Eren, 2006).

⁵⁶ Mustafa Aydın, *Üç büyük gücün çatışma alanı Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Gökkuşbu, 2005).

⁵⁷ Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe: 1475-1600* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000), esp. 55-81, 287-465.

Russian sources, there is a slight anti-Russian stance in their works.⁵⁸ In addition to these, Michael Khodarkovsky includes the North Caucasus in his *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* as a part of the steppe frontier to the south of Muscovy.⁵⁹ Apart from this monograph, he also authored an article on the Muscovite/Russian relations with the North Caucasus and policies that aimed at domination and colonization of the region.⁶⁰ Charles King published his *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* in 2008. He claims that the imperial powers “consistently overestimate their own power and underestimate the resolve of those they aim to conquer.” King’s monograph generally focuses on the struggles of the local peoples for freedom against the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century and against the Russian Federation in the 1990s.⁶¹ In spite of dealing with the later centuries, John F. Baddeley’s works are also important to see the general picture of the Caucasus on the eve of the Russian conquest and the Russian policies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶² In addition to these, a comprehensive and very good study on the history of Daghestani politics and the role of Islam in Daghestan was published in 2005 in German by Michael Kemper. This book is also important in terms of the primary sources used by the author such as chroniclers and other

⁵⁸ Marie Bennigsen Broxup, ed., *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World* (London: C. Hurst, 1992); Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejaye, “La structure sociale, politique et religieuse du Caucase du nord au XVI^e siècle,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 25 (1984): 125-48; Alexandre Bennigsen, “L’expédition turque contre Astrakhan en 1569, d’après les Registres des ‘Affaires importantes’ des Archives ottomanes,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 8 (1967), 427-46.

⁵⁹ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Michael Khodarkovsky, “Of Christianity, Enlightenment, and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800,” *The Journal of Modern History* 71 (1999): 394-430.

⁶¹ Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶² J. F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans and Green, 1908); J. F. Baddeley, *The Rugged Flanks of Caucasus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

manuscripts on law and judicial affairs written by the Daghestanis in Arabic, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, it is one of the few books in western languages that offer a comprehensive study of the Daghestani peoples from the medieval times till the nineteenth century with a broad section on the early modern period as well.⁶³ At this point, the prominent scholar of medieval Iran and the Caucasus Vladimir Minorsky should also be mentioned. His translation and commentaries of *Hudud al-'alam*, and his other works on the medieval Caucasus and its people are important for understanding the ethnic mixes of the North and South Caucasus in our period.⁶⁴

One of the shortcomings of Western scholarship on the North Caucasus is what we can call “source-bias.” Most western scholars working on the North Caucasus are able to read and consult Russian sources, but not the Turkish ones. This causes some problems with regard to the objectiveness of the works produced. For example, in spite of writing his monograph in 2008, at a time when some western historians such as Chantal Lemerquier-Quelquejay, Marie Bennigsen Broxup, and Michael Khodarkovsky have already produced valuable works related to the region, Walter Richmond uses almost only Russian sources and remains heavily influenced by the historiography of the Soviet era in claiming that the North Caucasus polities regarded the Muscovites as saviours from the Crimean/Ottoman yoke and aggression in the region and that the North Caucasus chiefs allied themselves with the Muscovites voluntarily.⁶⁵ Similarly, F. Kazemzadeh relies solely on Russian historiography

⁶³ Michael Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan: Von den Khanaten und Gemeindebünden zum Ġihad-Staat* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2005).

⁶⁴ *Hudud al-'alam: The Regions of the World; A Persian Geography, 372 A.H.-982 A.D.*, trans. Vladimir Minorsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Trustees of the E.J. Gibb Memorial, 1937); Vladimir Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1953).

⁶⁵ Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

with regard to the Muscovite activities and imperial rivalry in the North Caucasus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this regard, his work is also one sided, telling us very little about the Ottoman or local perspective.⁶⁶ Although Muriel Atkin can be included in this category in terms of using only Russian language sources, her interpretations are less influenced by her sources.⁶⁷

Approach

The different nature of the Ottoman and Muscovite sources used in this dissertation is worth some elaboration. Croskey states that the basic unit of *posol'skaia kniga* is the embassy itself including the *nakaz*, *pamiat'*, and *stateinye spiski* parts.⁶⁸ The *mühimme* records, on the other hand, are copies of imperial orders which constitute the basic units of a *mühimme defter*. Furthermore, the Ottoman *hükm* was a direct response by the Porte to a petition by an individual or community or to a letter describing an event or situation by an Ottoman magistracy or vassal. The Muscovite documents, on the other hand, were prepared by the Posol'skii Prikaz for the envoys based on general principles, known realities of the region, and also some assumptions, which might or might not turn out to be fully pertinent to the embassy. Envoys were given alternative answers, questions, lines of action depending on what transpired during the embassy.

⁶⁶ Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Russian Penetration of the Caucasus," in *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 239-63.

⁶⁷ Muriel Atkin, "Russian Expansion in the Caucasus to 1813," in *Russian Colonial Expansion to 1917*, ed. Michael Rywkin (London: Mansell, 1988), 139-87.

⁶⁸ Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practise*, 18.

As these documents were prepared in advance, what was expected in Muscovy at the time of the departure of an envoy to a foreign ruler and the result of the embassy could be different. The nature of an Ottoman imperial order was, however, not the same. What the sultan ordered was the final word on the issue unless it was an order asking for a report or further news about certain events. In the Muscovite case, most of the time, we know what happened during the negotiations with foreign rulers or local tribal chiefs as these were reported by the envoys after returning to Moscow. However, in some cases we do not know what sorts of actions were taken by the Muscovite government after envoys reported the situation on their routes. For example, sometimes it is not known what the tsar ordered or how the Muscovite policy makers reacted if a local North Caucasus chief was rebellious and an envoy reported it to the tsar. Moreover, the Posol'skii Prikaz had a certain code of conduct and way of translation that sometimes were at odds with what was understood by local chiefs or foreign rulers at the negotiations, especially in negotiations with the local rulers in borderlands such as Circassian, Georgian or Nogay rulers. For example, as soon as Temriuk of Kabarda swore allegiance to the Muscovite tsar, the whole of Kabarda was considered a part of the Muscovite realm in the understanding of the Posol'skii Prikaz. On the other hand, although they had a strong sway over the northwestern Caucasus and Circassian tribes, the Ottomans at the domestic level did not consider the whole area or all the tribes in that region as a part of the Ottoman realm. This we understand from examples of their internal correspondences recorded in *mühimmes*. The Porte inquired many times with the governors of Azak and Kefe about the tribes and chiefs that were loyal to the Porte and those who were rebellious or had not yet submitted. It should be noted; however, when these issues were discussed with Muscovite envoys or in the letters to foreign rulers, the Ottomans claimed that

the Ottoman sultan and the Crimean khan were the legitimate rulers of these lands. Therefore, due to the nature of the *mühimme* documents in this connection—domestic correspondence between the Porte and Ottoman governors— researchers can obtain more precise information about the smaller polities or chiefs in the North Caucasus. Although, the Muscovite diplomatic parlance even in domestic correspondence tends to show all of these smaller polities or local chiefs as loyal subjects of the tsar, the Ottoman documents show which ones were loyal and which ones were “still” rebellious.

In terms of details covered with regard to the peoples, rulers, and polities of the North Caucasus, the Muscovite documents have abundance of factual information about the names of tribal leaders, North Caucasus chiefs, settlements, and travel routes compared to the Ottoman orders related to the same issues or areas. To illustrate, one can extract from Ottoman documents that Aslanbek of Kabarda was a chief in the North Caucasus serving the Ottoman sultan.⁶⁹ However, the Muscovite documents provide us with important facts that Aslanbek was chosen as the *pshihua* of Kabarda and was one of the most important Kabardinian chiefs in the 1580s. One can also learn about Aslanbek’s settlements, his sons, and other relatives by reading the ambassadorial reports written by the Muscovite envoys.⁷⁰ These are the main differences between these two sets of primary sources available for this study. It should also be added that the *mühimmes* and *posol’skie knigi* are not sufficiently utilized in relation to the Caucasus and northern Black Sea region in spite of the fact that these documents have been around in scholarship for a relatively long time by now. Basically, these two sets of primary documents tell different stories. The nature of these

⁶⁹ MD 25, no. 2052; MD 44, no. 182, 190; and MD 51, no. 10.

⁷⁰ RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, 275b; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 112, 131.

primary documents, in addition to the neutral space that is going to be explained presently, determined the organization of the present dissertation.

When we look at the Ottoman-Muscovite relations, there was no direct Ottoman-Muscovite military confrontation in the second half of the sixteenth century. Muscovy did not even send an army against the Ottomans in 1569 when an Ottoman army set off to capture Astrakhan. This was partly a consequence of the Muscovite policy of avoidance of conflict with the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. Therefore, we can say that there was a neutral space that the Ottoman Porte and especially the Muscovite government intentionally created and maintained in the North Caucasus. Policies of these imperial powers manifest this neutral space as it will be seen in the following chapters.

Following the Astrakhan campaign of 1569, both the Ottomans and the Muscovites preferred to confront each other through their vassals in the North Caucasus. As for Muscovites, conflict with the Porte was too risky because a combined army of the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans could have been fatal to their very existence as a new and growing power in Eurasia. For the Porte, a war in the northern frontier was too costly in comparison with prospective revenues that it eventually would yield. That is why the both Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire employed a plausible deniability in their common frontier. Accordingly, events and conflicts between their clients in the open steppe or in the North Caucasus during the sixteenth century could not be allowed to damage the relations between these two imperial powers.⁷¹ Thus, the imperial powers could have amicable relations and exchange

⁷¹ Brian James Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20-23; Brian James Boeck, "Shifting Boundaries on the Don Steppe Frontier: Cossacks, Empires and Nomads to 1739" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002), 11-12.

envoys while their clients in the steppes carried out raiding and plundering against each other, which were to be protested but not seen as cause for a full-scale campaign. A good example was when a Kabardinian party came to the Muscovite tsar and petitioned his help against the Ottomans, the Tatars, and the *shamkhal* of Daghestan, the tsar agreed to protect these Kabardinians from the Crimean Tatars and the *shamkhal* but rejected to help them against the Ottoman sultan since “he wished to be in friendship with him.”⁷² Similarly, when one of the Ottoman clients in Kabarda was attacked by the Muscovites, the Porte did not go to a war against Muscovy.⁷³

Because of the different stories told in the two main bodies of primary sources and the above mentioned neutral space that was created in the North Caucasus between the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman and Muscovite policies are examined in two separate chapters based on these primary sources and in relation to some important events that affected political and social structures of the North Caucasus. Personages or events in the North Caucasus mentioned both in the Ottoman and Muscovite primary sources will be highlighted and analyzed comparatively when possible. The overlapping and non-overlapping activities and policies of the Porte and Muscovy will also be pointed out throughout the dissertation.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 will provide an outline for the realities and peculiarities of the peoples and polities of the North Caucasus when Muscovy proved itself to be a skilled and vigorous contender for domination of the region. It also gives a chronological overview of the history of Ottoman and Muscovite involvements in the North

⁷² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 6.

⁷³ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 182-83.

Caucasus in the second half of the sixteenth century. Chapter 2 examines Ottoman northern strategies chronologically and as applied to two important events in the sixteenth century—the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569 and the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590. It shows how these two events shaped the strategies of the Ottoman Porte in the North Caucasus and led to a mature Ottoman policy. Chapter 3 presents how Muscovite southern or steppe strategies functioned in the North Caucasus where they would need to modify their policies in order to be successful against the Ottoman/Crimean party. Chapter 4 gives a thematic outline of the Ottoman and Muscovite policies in their common frontier and explains the components and objectives of the grand imperial policies of the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy. Chapter 5 is designed to show how local rulers of the North Caucasus reacted to the imperial rivalry and what choices they had in order to preserve their status and power.

CHAPTER 1

THE LANDS, PEOPLES, RELIGIOUS CULTURE, AND EVENTS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW

1.1. The Land

The notion of the North Caucasus evokes highlands, untamed tribal societies, bandits, constant warfare, and fierce freedom loving people mostly thanks to popular Russian literary classics. However, the sixteenth-century North Caucasus was much more complicated and diverse than such stereotypical representations portray. It was a unique region in terms of its geographical features, social and political structures, and the status of religion among its peoples.

Geographically, the North Caucasus is surrounded by the Black and Azov seas to the west, the Caspian Sea to the east, the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus Mountains to the south, and Kuma-Manych depression and the Kuban River to the north. The northern slopes and westernmost part of the Greater Caucasus Mountains including also its southern slopes at the west end are also considered a part of the North Caucasus region. The North Caucasus terrain is composed of many different types of landscapes—coastlines along the Black and Caspian seas, fertile plains, steppes, valleys, high and low mountains, and foothills.

With a width of 50 to 200 kilometres the Greater Caucasus Mountain range not only divides the Caucasus into its northern and southern parts but also constitutes the traditional

border between Europe and Asia. Stretching more than 1200 kilometres from southeast to northwest, it has been a huge barrier throughout history. The Greater Caucasus Mountains are divided into three sections—western, central, and eastern. Western section stretches from the Taman peninsula as far as the source of the Kuban River with an average height of 2500-3000 meters. The mountain range in the west lying parallel with the shore leaves a very narrow coastal strip with rugged terrain. The central range is the widest and highest of the Greater Caucasus Mountains going as far as the Daryal Pass which stands at 2382 meters. This section includes Mount Elburz, the highest mountain in Europe with a height of 5629 meters, and Mount Kazbek (4877 meters). Daghestan constitutes the eastern section of the main mountain range. It covers the area from the Daryal as far as the Absheron peninsula. The northern slopes of the main chain of the Greater Caucasian Mountains merge with the North Caucasian steppe, which is a part of the Great Eurasian Steppe. As for rivers, Terek, Kuban, and Kuma constitute the three major river systems in the North Caucasus. The Kuban River originates in the western section of the Caucasian Mountains and follows a northwesterly direction and falls into the Sea of Azov. The Kuma and Terek rivers originate in the central range and fall into the Caspian Sea. There are many smaller rivers feeding these three main rivers of the North Caucasus.¹

The western part of the North Caucasus is traditionally known as the Kuban region in the scholarly literature. The sixteenth-century Kuban region including the Taman peninsula

¹ For geographical descriptions of the North Caucasus, see W. E. D. Allen and P. P. Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border, 1828-1921* (Cambridge [England]: University Press, 1953), 1-12; Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-12; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh svyazi s Rossiei: Vtoraia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963) 39-154; Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 65-68; Kadircan Kafli, *Şimali Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Vakıf, 1942), 5-9.

was inhabited by several Circassian tribal polities, collectively called the Adyghe. The northeast part, including Kuma-Manych depression, was the Nogay steppe, named after the Nogay nomads who inhabited the region in the sixteenth century. The area along shores of the Caspian Sea in the east was Daghestan, where several local political entities composed of various ethnic groups such as Kumyks, Laks, and Avars were active. The central part of the Caucasus was Kabarda, inhabited by the Kabardinians.

As the Greater Caucasus Mountains formed a barrier between the North and South Caucasus, mountain passes were of strategic importance both for the local peoples and imperial powers trying to control the region. There were three main mountain passes that connected the North and the South Caucasus. The most famous and the most convenient pass for troops and transport was the Derbend Pass located in the very east where the Greater Caucasus Mountains falls to the Caspian. The width of this band of shore is 2 to 30 kilometres. The Derbend Pass had the renowned name of Bab al-Abwab (lit., “Gate of the Gates”), among Middle Eastern Empires, a name originally given by the Arab armies in the eighth century. In the sixteenth century, the Derbend Pass was the most important one due to the trade routes that connected Safavid Iran with Muscovy and even the Baltic region. In the same period, the other important pass was the Daryal Pass that went through in the Central Caucasus Mountains starting from the Kabarda region through the Terek Valley to the Georgian kingdoms. The Daryal Pass was the main connection and raid route between the Kabardinian lands and the Georgian kingdoms in the South Caucasus. It followed the banks of the Terek River and then went towards the Araghi Valley in the south. One other possible passage was in the western part through the eastern shores of the Black Sea along the

shoreline. However, its terrain was very rugged and narrow, and in the sixteenth century, this passageway was easily controlled from the sea by the Ottoman naval forces.

Therefore, while the Black Sea route was strictly controlled by the Ottomans, the Derbend Pass was controlled by local Daghestani rulers and the Safavids. When Muscovy appeared as yet another player in the region, the only passage that they were able to use to connect with the South Caucasus and their Georgian allies in the second half of the sixteenth century was the Daryal Pass, which was then controlled by the Kabardinian chiefs in its northern part and by the Georgians in its southern part. This could be the reason the Muscovite tsar desired allegiance of the Kabardinian chiefs more than other North Caucasus rulers in spite of the fact that the Besleneys and Janeyns submitted to the Muscovite tsar as early as 1552, earlier than the Kabardinians did, in 1557.

Apart from the aforementioned geographical north-south variation, there was also an east-west political variation based on the Ottoman and Safavid spheres of influence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The western part was traditionally claimed by the Ottomans through their vassal, the Crimean Khanate, while the eastern part, including Shirvan and some Daghestani principalities, were claimed by the Safavid Iran. The Safavid influence in Daghestan, however, was quite limited and in fact nominal. The same east-west variation was also obvious between the Georgian kingdoms, Armenia, and Turkic khanates in Azerbaijan. They too were divided between the Ottoman and Safavid spheres of influence.²

These formidable geographical conditions in large part shaped the social and political structures of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Due to its geographical features including

² King, *Ghost of Freedom*, 12-13.

high mountains, steppes, and foothills, which were hard to dominate or unite, the peoples of the North Caucasus lived in small polities or tribal communities. The same conditions also posed great challenges for the imperial powers surrounding the area. For this reason, it required so much materiel, man-power, and money for any power to establish real sovereignty over the North Caucasus. Therefore, imperial powers preferred to find trustworthy vassals in the region and assert their sovereignty over certain parts of the North Caucasus through them. The vassals and allies they would find in the region were varied significantly in terms of their political and social structures.

From the imperial point of view, the North Caucasus tribal organizations and polities were borderland societies with primitive means of political organization. Since communication and transportation were not easy, none of the local polities in the North Caucasus could expand at the expense of others and many small political powers continued to exist in the region. However, it was still possible to establish some form of sovereignty over the local polities of the North Caucasus with a constructive and manipulative imperial policy as the cases of the Muscovites and the Ottomans would show in the second half of the century.

1.2. The Peoples

In the mid-sixteenth century, there were several stable and relatively strong feudal polities in the North Caucasus. They were Kabarda in the central and Dagestan in the eastern sections of the Greater Caucasian Mountains. The Kabardinians and Daghestani people were able to develop stratified social structures compared to their neighbours in the north western parts of the Caucasus or those in the very high mountain regions. However, the authority of their local rulers was still quite limited and none of the chiefs proved strong enough to exercise

rule over the others.³ At this point, it should be noted that the term Circassian (from Turkic Çerkas) is used for the north western Ibero-Caucasian people. It encompasses the Kabardinians and the Adyghe who speak dialects that are mutually intelligible but excludes the Daghestanis and smaller Eastern Caucasian peoples.⁴ The Adyghe refers to the western tribes of the Circassians.⁵ Now we shall look more closely at each region and its people(s) in the North Caucasus.

1.2.1. The Kabardinians

Kabarda was located in the Terek river basin in the central mountain range and covered the area from the Beshtav region to Dagestan. As such, the Kabardinians occupied a strategically important sector of the North Caucasus. It was the region where trade routes that passed through the North Caucasus intersected, namely the Central Asia-Astrakhan-Crimea route. Furthermore, the Kabardinians were able to control northern parts of the Daryal Pass. They were in the middle of the north-south and east-west connections in the North Caucasus. Thus, the Muscovites first tried to establish their authority over the Kabardinians who had been claimed as subjects also by the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, since their alliance and loyalty might very well have allowed control over the entire Caucasian mountain range.⁶

³ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 15-16, 26. Rahimizade İbrahim Harimi, *Tarih-i Osman Paşa*, ed. Yunus Zeyrek (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), 44-45.

⁴ Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cherkes," *EP*, 2: 21.

⁵ Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the sixteenth century," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London: C. Hurst, 1992), 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

Their society was highly stratified and complicated, but also flexible, which created some practical problems for the imperial powers to understand and manipulate. Kabardinian society was dominated by a large number of princely clans the heads of which had the title of *pshi*. It denoted the oldest member of a clan, namely a princely family, whose power was based on the number of *burgs* that they possessed.⁷ *Burgs* were fortress-like strongholds made of stones where *pshis* took refuge in case of emergencies. The Ottomans used the term *bey* (once meant ruler, then prince, and in the sixteenth century was mainly used to denote a governor) or *mirza* (originally from Persian *emir-zade*, which denoted a prince) to refer to a *pshi*. The Muscovites used *kniaz* (prince) and a variant of *mirza*, *murza*. The Kabardinian *pshi* families considered Prince Inal Teghen, who united all Circassians under one state in the late fifteenth century, as being at the apex of their common lineage and thus they considered themselves as being related to each other.⁸ They used *mirza* (*mirze*, *murza*) for *pshis'* children with women who were of the same rank, while children born from women of a lower status had the title of *tuma*.⁹ This has obviously created some confusion for the Ottomans and Muscovites who at times used the term *mirza* to refer to a *pshi*, while at other times to refer to a *pshi's* child. However, in the Ottoman diplomatic parlance, there is a rather clear preference to refer to a *pshi* with *bey*. On the other hand, most of the time, the Muscovites used *kniaz* for a *pshi* or a *mirza* in the Circassian context without paying particular attention to the real status of a Kabardinian political elite. In general, the

⁷ For the social structure and titles of the nobility of Kabarda in detail see Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, 156-60. *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589-1605)*, ed. W. E. D. Allen, texts trans. Anthony Mango (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), 26-29.

⁸ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 2-3.

⁹ Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, 156-60.

Kabardinian princely families were extended families. The oldest member of the family was the head of the family. As such, the inheritance was not linear (vertical), i.e., from father to son, but rather lateral (horizontal), i.e., from brother to brother. Their estates were the rural settlements known as *kabak*. A *pshi* owned many *kabaks* and *burgs* which determined his overall influence in the Kabardinian society.

Beneath the *pshis* were the *work* (sometimes transcribed as *werk* or *uork*), which represented the nobility. The Muscovites used the Turkic term *uzden* (from a Turkic term for nobles, *özden*, lit., “from among the special ones”) to refer to the Kabardianian *works*. *Works* were divided into two groups—*tlakotlesh* (more noble) in Kabardinian and *dezhenugo* (less noble). The Muscovites sometimes agreed to take members of the *works* as hostages instead of the sons of the Kabardinian chiefs, which was a concomitant of submission to tsar. Thus, these nobles were obviously valuable to the *pshis*. They had a certain degree of autonomy and were endowed with the privilege of changing their patron (princes) or even entering into alliance with different external powers.¹⁰ Moreover, the *pshis* were obliged to consult with their *works* before making important decisions.¹¹ There was an ancient tradition among the Kabardinians of choosing a *pshihua/pschim yapsch* (grand prince/the princes of the princes) from among the *pshis*. The grand prince was chosen by an assembly of gentry composed of all *pshis* and *works* of Kabarda known as *zeuche*.¹² Despite the supposed loftiness of his title, in reality, due to the very strong feudal structure of the society, the *pshihua* held no power and no authority over the other *pshis*.

¹⁰ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” 26.

¹¹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 143-46.

¹² Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, 62.

As for the lower classes, there were two categories of peasants. First were the *tlfekotl*, land owning peasants.¹³ These land owning peasants constituted the most populous class of the Kabardinian society. Second were the *og/loganapit*, peasants upon who forced labour was imposed on behalf of the nobles. Slaves, called *azat* (from Persian “azad”, lit., “free” [sic]) constituted the lowest group in Kabardinian society.¹⁴

1.2.2. The Adyghe (Western Circassians)

To the west of Kabarda were the Adyghe with a more flexible social structure compared to their neighbours to the east. It consisted of several related tribes who inhabited the Taman peninsula, the middle and lower basin of the Kuban River. The strongest and most active tribes of the Adyghe were the Janey, Kemirkoys, and Besleneys. The first two settled in the Kuban region while the Besleneys were in the Beshtav (Piatigorsk) region. The Besleneys are sometimes classified with the Kabardinians rather than being considered a part of the Adyghe due to their proximity to Kabarda and their often intermingled history. Indeed, there is no clear cut classification of the Circassian tribes. In fact, the Besleneys (originally two hundred families) had split from the Kabardinians and left Kabarda under their prince, Kanoke, during the reign of Idar of Kabarda, son of Inal, in the first years of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ However, for the purposes of this study, the Besleneys are considered a part of the Adyghe because both the Ottoman and Muscovite officials considered the Besleneys and the Kabardinians separately and dealt with the Besleneys as a part of the Adyghe (Western) Circassians.

¹³ Ibid., 157-58.

¹⁴ M. Sadık Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Eren, 2005), 24.

¹⁵ Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, 51-55.

The social structure of the Adyghe was similar to that of the Kabardinians. However, their feudal hierarchy was less rigid in comparison with the Kabardinians. Moreover, politically compared to the Kabardinians by the virtue of being closer to the Crimean Khanate and Ottoman strongholds, they were less autonomous and more under the pressure of the Porte and the Crimean Khanate. Just as the Kabardinians, Adyghe chiefs were called *pshi*. The *pshis* of the Adyghe also traced their genealogy back to the same Prince Inal and claimed their princely legitimacy through him.¹⁶ The Adyghe had the tradition of choosing a grand prince as well. There is an example of a Kemirkoy grand prince, Bolatoke, who was also a son of Prince Inal.¹⁷ However, by the sixteenth century this tradition was no longer continued. The noble class of the Adyghe was the *uozden* or *özden*. Beneath the noble class were the *tekhoqotle*, peasants with no obligation of forced labour. There were the *pshitle*, peasants upon whom forced labour was imposed. The last strata were the slaves called *unatle* in the Adyghe language.

The social structure of the Abazas, who inhabited the area south of the Greater Caucasus Mountain chain between the Kuban and Kabarda, was the same except that their clan chiefs did not even have the same authority as the chiefs of the other Adyghe peoples and they used different names for their social classes. Their feudal ladder was composed of the *akha/ah* (lords, chiefs), *aamistadi/aamista/tawad* (nobles), *anyayoutskia/tefekashou* (land-owning peasants), *ahipshi* (serfs), and *unavi* (slaves).

The Adyghe tribes that are mentioned in the Ottoman and Muscovite documents most often are the Janeys who lived in the Taman peninsula, Besleneys who occupied the area of

¹⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹⁷ Ibid., 162.

the Beshtav along with some Kabardinian clans, and the Kemirkoys in the Kuban area. Apart from these, there were Abadzehs, Shapsuhs, and the Hatukhays who were living in the mountainous areas in the south of the Kuban. These tribal groupings had no feudal hierarchy and were composed of free peasants with equal rights organized into *cema'ats* (from Arabic *jama'at*, lit., “assembly, society”).¹⁸

1.2.3. The Daghestanis

Daghestan means “the lands of mountains” in Turkish. It constitutes the eastern section of the Greater Caucasian Mountains. As its name implicates, the Daghestan was a very mountainous area and hard to control. Daghestani peoples were ethnically, linguistically, and religiously very mixed. In the sixteenth century, Daghestan was predominantly inhabited by Kumyks, Laks, Avars, Kaytaks, and many other smaller groups. All these groupings were predominantly Muslim. In fact, the local population of Daghestan was the first in the North Caucasus to convert to Islam. It started in the eighth and ninth centuries with the Arab invasions against the Khazars. Among the Muslim population in Daghestan, Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school of law formed the majority.¹⁹ There were also some Shi'ite Muslims and even a small Jewish population, who claimed that their ancestors were brought to Daghestan by the conquering Assyrians and Babylonians.²⁰

In the sixteenth century, the Shamkhalat of Daghestan was the strongest polity in the region. The shamkhalat had a very complex feudal system. The Kumyks constituted the most

¹⁸ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” 27.

¹⁹ Anna Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom: The Sufi Response to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 26-28.

²⁰ They are called Dag-Chufut (Mountain Jews) in Daghestan. W. Barthold, A. Bennigsen, “Daghistan,” *EF*², 2:86-87; Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 26.

populous group of the polity. They were pastoralists and spoke a Kipchak dialect of Turkic. Apart from the Kumyks, the shamkhalat also had a Lak population. The family of the *shamkhals* was originally of Lak origin coming from the village (*aul*) of Gazi-Kumuk, which had been the centre of the shamkhalat until the sixteenth century and due to which the Laks were known as Gazi Kumuks (Kazi Kumukh in the Muscovite documents).²¹ The Laks spoke an Eastern Ibero-Caucasian language. The social structure of the shamkahalat was governed by the *adat*, customary law. The *shamkhal* was the ruler of the polity traditionally called Shamkhalat of Tarku in the sixteenth century because their center was the town of Tarku. He was at the top of the social order with the princely clan including the princes called the khans and their relatives who were given titles of *mirza* and *beg*.²²

The shamkhalat was divided into yurds and each of these yurds was governed by a princely clan. The heir apparent of the shamkhalat was called *Krym-shamkhal* in and situated in the village (*aul*) of Buinak.²³ Beneath the princely clan was the *chanka*, which comprised of the children of the princely clan members with women of lesser classes. The third strata called *uzden*, consisted of free noble agricultural lords, who were considered vassals of the *shamkhal*. Favoured *uzdens* who were granted the best lands were known as *sala uzden*. Next to the *uzdens* were the land-owning peasants, who constituted most of the population. They were organized into the *cema'ats*, which helped them to preserve their tribal and family relations (*tukhum*). The peasants upon whom forced labour was imposed

²¹ W. Barthold, A. Bennigsen, "Daghistan," 2:86-87.

²² Ibid., 87-89; Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 24; Zelkina, *In Quest for God*, 14-21.

²³ W. Barthold, A. Bennigsen, "Daghistan," 2:87; Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 32. Lemerrier-Quelquejay states that the title *Krym-shamkhal* also had the form *Yarım-shamkhal* (Ott. "Half-Shamkhal"). However, she does not provide any reference to a primary source attesting this form.

were the *cagar* or *rayat* (from Arabic *ra'iyah*, lit., “subject, flock). At the bottom of the social ladder were slaves called *yasir* or *kul* (a Turkic term for slave).²⁴

The Daghestani principality of the Kaytaks, ruled by the *usmi* (lit., “renowned” from Arabic *ism* and sometimes transcribed as *ustmii* in the Muscovite/Russian sources; hence the principality was sometimes known as the Usmiat of Kaytak), was also influential in the affairs of the North Caucasus. Its lands covered the area between the Kura River and the territories of the shamkhalat to the north. Their center was the fortress of Kureysh, named after their claims of ancestry from the tribe of the Prophet, Mohammad. The population of the principality was heterogeneous, though it mostly consisted of the Kaytaks who spoke an Ibero-Caucasian language. The *usmi* was considered to be the strongest ruler of the mountainous area who could muster an army of 1,500 or much more in case of emergency.²⁵ Due to the proximity of the principality to Derbend, the Kaytaks were able to control Tarku-Derbend road and theirs was a richer polity compared to other polities of Daghestan except for the shamkhalat. The *usmi* was chosen from among the elders of the dynasty’s family. The *usmi* of the principality in the second half of the sixteenth century until 1587-88 was Ahmed Khan.²⁶

Another Daghestani principality was Tabarasan, a small but important polity located around the fortress of Derbend. Its ruler had the title *ma'sum* (sometimes known as

²⁴ D. M. Ataev et. al, *Istoriia Dagestana*, vol. 1(Moscow: Glavnaia Redaktsiia Vostochnoi literatury, 1967), 239-40.

²⁵ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 48.

²⁶ W. Barthold, A. Bennigsen, “Daghistan,” 2:87.

tabarasan shah); in the 1570s the *ma'sum* was Gazi Salih.²⁷ The population of this principality was composed of Tabarasans and Lezgins, both of whom spoke Ibero-Caucasian languages.²⁸ Compared with other Daghestani polities, it was a small principality, which could only muster 500 mounted warriors.²⁹

Another important polity in Daghestan was the Khanate of the Avars, which was located along Koysu Andi, Koysu Avar, and Kara Koysu branches of the Sulak River. Its center was the town of Hunzah. The Avar ruler was known as the *nutsal*. The Daghestani Avars spoke an eastern Ibero-Caucasian language called *Maaroul Mats* (lit., “Mountain Language”) and called themselves *Maaroulal* (mountaineers). The Avars of Daghestan were Ibero-Caucasian and had no connections to the nomadic Avars who most famously established an empire that in the mid-sixth century centered in Pannonia that threatened Europe for about a century and a half. Some claim that the name Avar which in Turkic means “free” or “vagabond” was given to them by the Turkic Kumyks.³⁰ The Avars were less feudal and their social structure was quite laxer and more flexible. In the khanate, the tribal structure remained very strong in the sixteenth century. For this reason, in some mountainous and remote villages, the authority of the *nutsal* was ignored. Their *nutsal* in the 1570s and 1580s was Tuchalav Burhaneddin, whose name is frequently mentioned in the Ottoman sources.

²⁷ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, MS, Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye Library, 4350, 22b-24b.

²⁸ Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 20-22

²⁹ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 47.

³⁰ H. Carrere D'encausse and A. Bennigsen, “Avars,” *EI*², 1:755-56.

1.2.4. The Cossacks

Cossacks began to inhabit the region as of the second half of the sixteenth century. The first mention of Cossack villages in the North Caucasus was made in 1563. These were probably the Greben Cossacks living near the mountain range on the left bank of the Sunzha River.³¹ The origin of the Greben Cossacks is vague. One of the tales about their origin says that they were originally Ryazan Cossacks who fled from oppression by Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III (r. 1462-1505) and eventually reached the Terek where they founded their settlement.³² It is also claimed that they were descendants of Novgorod pirates of the fourteenth century (the so-called *ushkuiniks*).³³ They probably began to come to the foothills along the Sunzha in the beginning of the sixteenth century and were composed of outlawed elements. These Cossacks were known as *Grebentsi* because of the ranges of hills around their settlements (*greben'* means ridge or crest).³⁴ They remained a Christian community and accepted only Christians or converts into their ranks. They were an important element in sixteenth century North Caucasus politics.³⁵

At around the same time Cossacks who came from the lower Volga and Don in the middle of the sixteenth century began to settle and colonize the region along the Terek River.

³¹ Thomas Barrett, *At the Edge of the Empire: the Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier, 1700-1860* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 13.

³² John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans and Green, 1908), 7.

³³ Barret, *At the Edge of the Empire*, 13.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

³⁵ Brian James Boeck, "Shifting Boundaries on the Don Steppe Frontier: Cossacks, Empires and Nomads to 1739" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002), 21.

Hence they became known as the Terek Cossacks.³⁶ Compared to the Greben Cossacks, the Terek Cossacks were more open to foreign elements and even accepted non-Christians into their ranks. Both the Greben and other Cossacks of the North Caucasus were eventually collectively known as the Terek Cossacks. In the sixteenth century, Cossacks inhabiting the frontiers and steppes were organized in similar socio-military structures. Every Cossack host chose its own officials. Although the Cossacks usually acted independently, the Ottomans, the Crimeans, and the North Caucasus peoples considered them as being natural allies of Muscovy.

In addition to the aforementioned Cossack hosts that settled in the North Caucasus and despite living outside of the region, two other Cossacks hosts played significant roles in North Caucasus affairs during our period. These were the Zaporozhian and Don Cossacks. Zaporozhian Cossacks, who were primarily ethnic Ukrainians (Ruthenians) who had migrated from their original territories in south eastern Poland-Lithuania, had their fortified settlement and administrative center called the *sich* located just below the Dniepr rapids. Under Hetman Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi, they were especially active in the north western Caucasus in 1556-1561.³⁷ In the sixteenth century, the Don Cossacks were clients of Muscovy and settled along the middle and lower Don River. They were active in the North Caucasus during the Ottoman campaign of 1578-1590.³⁸ Activities and impacts of these two

³⁶ Ibid., 13; I. Popko, *Terskie kazaki s starodavnikh vremen* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Departamenta udielov, 1880), 35-37.

³⁷ Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, vol. 7, *The Cossack Age to 1625*, trans. Bohdan Struminski and eds. Serhii Polokhy and Frank E. Sysyn (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1999), 88-98. Also see Liubomyr Vynar, *Kniaz Dmytro Vyshnevets'kyi* (Munich: Ukrainian Free Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1964).

³⁸ Brian James Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 14-17, 27-30.

Cossack hosts with regards to the history of the North Caucasus will be explained in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

1.2.5. The Nogays

Another important group were the Nogays. The Nogays were Turkic speaking pastoral nomads with a very rigid social hierarchy similar to other Turkic polities in Eurasia. They were the most nomadic people in the North Caucasus. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they were quite an effective military power along the Volga. By the 1550s the Nogays occupied the large area stretching from the Yaik River to the lower Volga. Since the Nogays did not have a Chinggisid political elite, their ruler had the title of mere bey (*biy*, *beg*), not khan. Sons of the bey were given *yurds* (appanages) and were known as *mirzas* (*murza*). The heir-apparent of the Nogay Horde was given the title of *nuredдин* and he was normally assigned to the western borders of the Nogay Horde. The second-in-rank to the succession in the Nogay Horde was *kekovat* (*keykuvat*) and he was assigned to the *yurds* along the eastern border.³⁹ Similar to the other post-Golden Horde political entities, the power of the bey was limited. The Nogay *mirzas* enjoyed very broad autonomy and were able to conduct their own external affairs.

The Nogays split into separate *uluses* in 1557 when Kazi (Ghazi) Mirza and his Nogays separated themselves from the Nogays of İsmail Bey who was an ally of Muscovy in the Volga region. Kazi Mirza and his Nogays migrated to the Kuban region close to the Ottoman province of Azak and came to known as the Lesser Nogay Horde (*Kiçi Ulus*).⁴⁰

³⁹ V. V. Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2002), 90-92.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 86, 171.

They were permitted to settle in this region as a vassal of the Crimean Khanate by the Ottoman Porte. The Greater Nogay Horde (*Ulu Nogay*) remained in the lower Volga region around Astrakhan and was as a client of Muscovy for the rest of the sixteenth century except for the periods when their leadership approached the Porte and joined Ottoman campaigns in the Caucasus.⁴¹

1.3. Religious Culture in the North Caucasus

Both the Muscovites and Ottomans tried to convert especially animist local populations of the North Caucasus into their religion because they thought such a conversion would cement their loyalty or alliance. Local peoples of the North Caucasus were Muslim, Christian, or animist. However, leaving Dagestan aside, particularly for the Circassians, such religious identities did not mean much. For a Circassian tribe, having a certain religion did not necessarily mean that they would ally with or submit to an imperial power having the same religion. Most of the time local rulers were very open to conversion and there are examples of rulers and nobles who converted to a different religion more than once or families with Christians, Muslim, and animists members. At this point, religious landscape of each region in the North Caucasus should be mentioned briefly.

Until the late 1590s, most of the Kabardinian population were animists.⁴² There were also some people who practiced Christianity with an influence of animism. Christianity in the North Caucasus had been introduced to the local population by the Byzantine Empire in the

⁴¹ For the Muscovite-Nogay relations in this period, see *Posol'skie knigi po sviaziam Rossii s Nogaiskoi Ordoi (1551-1561) gg.*, ed. D. A. Mustafalina and V. V. Trepavlov (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatelstvo, 2006); *Posol'skaia kniga po sviaziam Rossii s Nogaiskoi Ordoi (1576 g.)*, ed. V. V. Trepavlov (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2003).

⁴² Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 26.

sixth century. After that, especially between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Genoese, having established colonies on the northern shores of the Black Sea, tried to convert Circassians into Catholicism by sending missionaries and building churches.⁴³ The Georgian Christians also influenced the Kabardinian elites and population.⁴⁴

However, starting in the second half of the sixteenth century, Kabardinian chiefs gradually accepted Islam or Orthodox Christianity in accordance with their political alliances with the Ottomans or Muscovites respectively. It was not until the 1560s that the Porte and the Crimean Tatars considered conversion a worthwhile policy in the North Caucasus. However, conversion was always a part of Muscovite policy especially for the animist populations they encountered. It should also be noted that Muscovite conversion policy was never imposed but rather was based on voluntary conversion. As the Muscovite records show, Kabardinian chiefs or nobles who traveled to Moscow in 1557 were converted to Orthodoxy but those who remained in Kabarda were not pressured to convert. As we see in the Ottoman documents, Kabardinian chiefs who traveled to Istanbul converted to Islam. This pattern held throughout the second half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Interestingly, chiefs from the same princely family served Muscovy or the Porte at the same time. Thus, it was possible for Christians, Muslims, and animists from the same family to serve different patrons, be it the Muscovite tsar, Crimean khan, or Ottoman sultan. To illustrate, the family of Temriuk who allied with Muscovy in 1557 was Muslim but his son, Sultankul, when traveled to Moscow, was baptized into Orthodoxy. However, Temriuk's other sons who stayed in Kabarda remained Muslims. Yet, the family was obviously allied

⁴³ Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, 49, 148-49.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

with the Muscovite tsar and loyal to him rather than other powers in the region regardless of their various religious affiliations.⁴⁵

Most of the Adyghe were also animists. However, there was also a populous Christian community that practised a heterodox version of Christianity. As we can gather from Ottoman and Muscovite sources, in the second half of the sixteenth century most of the Janey chiefs were Muslim but most of the Besleney and Kemirkoy chiefs were Christians. Similar to the Kabardinian chiefs, Adyghe chiefs sometimes converted in accordance with their political alliance of the moment. Those who went to Moscow to submit to the tsar in 1552 and 1555 were baptized. In the 1590s, we understand from Ottoman sources that the Besleney and Kemirkoy chiefs were converting to Islam. As with the case in Kabarda, conversion to Islam was also superficial and a Christian chief could serve the sultan or a Muslim chief could serve the tsar. For example, a Muslim Janey chief, Tsurak, was a loyal ally of the Zaporozhian Cossack leader Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi against the Ottomans in the early 1560s.⁴⁶ It should also be noted that even in the seventeenth century when most of the Circassians already converted to Islam, the religious beliefs of the Circassians were mixed with their ancestral animist traditions. Many Circassians, even in the Taman peninsula, were still animists but had some connection or familiarity with Islam.⁴⁷

The religious situation in Daghestan was more homogenous than other parts of the North Caucasus. The islamization of the Daghestanis started in the first half of the eighth

⁴⁵ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁷ Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi seyahatnamesi*, vol. 7, ed. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman, and Robert Dankoff (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 272.

century with the invading Arab armies and took several centuries before most of the Daghestanis converted to Islam.⁴⁸ In fact, Sunni Islam was the main bond that connected different ethnic and linguistic populations of Daghestan. Unlike the other parts of the North Caucasus, religion was a very significant constituent of the identity of the Daghestanis whose elites even claimed to have Arab ancestry as their aforementioned titles such as *shamkhal* or *usmi* indicate. Islam in Daghestan was solid and its rulers did not change their religious affiliation at all. *Shamkhal* and other local rulers of Daghestan considered the Ottomans natural allies in the sixteenth-century regional power struggle in the region.

Both the Greater and the Lesser Nogays were Sunni Muslims. Although the Greater Nogays were allies of the Muscovite tsar, they neither changed their religious beliefs nor did the Muscovites encourage the Nogay rulers to convert as they usually encouraged the Circassian chiefs. The Cossacks hosts on the other hand were Orthodox Christians and except for the Terek Cossacks, who were slightly more open to other religious faiths, Orthodoxy was a pivotal component of their identity.

1.4. The North Caucasus: An Overview of the Sixteenth Century

The North Caucasus in the second half of the sixteenth century was a borderland surrounded by three imperial powers, namely the Ottoman Empire, the Tsardom of Muscovy, and Safavid Iran. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the area had been a part of the borderland between the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde. Armies of the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde fought near the Terek River in the North Caucasus, which in 1262 ended in an

⁴⁸ Michael Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan: Von den Khanaten und Gemeindebünden zum Ğihad-Staat* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2005), 65-72; Zelkina, *In Quest for God*, 26-30.

Ilkhanid defeat and placed the North Caucasus under the rule of the Golden Horde.⁴⁹ Moreover, it was again in the North Caucasus by the Terek River that the Timurid armies annihilated the armies of Toktamış of the Golden Horde in 1395.⁵⁰ Times of trouble notwithstanding, it was the Golden Horde that dominated the steppes to the north of the Black and Caspian seas from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. In accordance with a pattern that was common in empires of the steppes, in the first half of the fifteenth century the Golden Horde eventually broke up into several states, each ruled by a different Chinggisid dynasty. These new states were the Great Horde, the Crimean Khanate, the Khanate of Kazan, and the Khanate of Sibir. The Khanate of Astrakhan was the last post-Golden Horde state to come into existence following the fall of the Great Horde to the Crimean Tatars in 1502.⁵¹ The Nogays were also a part of the former Golden Horde realm and continued their pure nomadic ways in the Volga basin as a formidable military power until the seventeenth century. All of these political entities claimed the heritage of the Golden Horde. In addition to these, illegitimate yet not surprising contender forged in steppe politics was the Principality of Moscow, which was assigned to handle taxation and other affairs of the Golden Horde khans in the Rus' territories.⁵²

⁴⁹ George Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran* (London: Routledge, 2003), 76.

⁵⁰ Bertold Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde: Die Mongolen in Russland, 1223-1502* (Leipzig, Otto Harrassowitz, 1943), 133-34; A. Yu. Yakubovskii, *Altın Ordu ve çöküşü*, trans. Hasan Eren (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 180-82.

⁵¹ Iliia V. Zaitsev, *Astrakhanskoe khanstvo* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2004), 32-58.

⁵² For the relations between the Golden Horde and the Principality of Muscovy, see George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, A History of Russia, vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953); Leo de Hartog, *Russia and the Mongol Yoke: The History of the Russian Principalities and the Golden Horde, 1221-1502* (New York: British Academic Press, 1996); Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (London: Tauris, 1987).

While these states were struggling in the north of the Black Sea for a big chunk of East Europe, a new power replaced the old Byzantine Empire and made Constantinople its capital in 1453, namely the Ottoman Empire. With the conquest of Constantinople, it not only inherited certain Byzantine imperial traditions of administration, but also adopted Byzantine strategies for dominating the Black Sea. Just as the Byzantine emperors had to be interested in the Black Sea and Caspian steppes for the protection of their imperial domains, the Ottoman sultans found themselves players in the affairs of the Black Sea and Caspian steppes in the fifteenth century.⁵³

After his conquest of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II (the Conqueror) annexed the Empire of Trebizond in 1461 and sent a fleet to conquer the northern shores of the Black Sea in 1475. The fleet under the command of Gedik Ahmed Pasha conquered Caffa (Ot. Kefe, Ukr. Feodosiya) and Tana (Ot. Azak, Rus. Azov) and reduced the Crimean Khanate to vassalage.⁵⁴ Four years later in 1479, another Ottoman fleet under the command of Cezeri Kasım Pasha captured Anapa, Koba and Taman, and subdued the “Circassians of the shore” (Aşağıra Çerkezleri).⁵⁵ The reign of Selim I (1512-1520), who had been the governor of Trabzon and presumably knew much about the Black Sea region and the Crimea, saw more

⁵³ Halil İnalcık, “The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans,” *Αρχαίον Πόντον* 35 (1979): 74-110, 415; Nagu Pienaru, “The Black Sea and the Ottomans: The Pontic Policy of Beyazid the Thunderbolt,” in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Change*, ed. Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 33-59.

⁵⁴ Halil İnalcık, “Yeni vesikalara göre Kırım hanlığının Osmanlı tabiliğine girmesi ve ahidname meselesi,” *Bellekten* 8 (1944): 185-229, Kefeli İbrahim bin Ali, *Tevarih-i Tatarhan ve Dağıstan ve Moskov ve Deşt-i Kıpçak ülkelerininindir*, ed. Cafer Seyit Kırimer (Pazarcık [Romania], 1933), 23.

⁵⁵ Abdülgaflar Kırımı, *Umdetü't-tevarih* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1924), 103. Ahmed Cevded Paşa, *Tezakir*, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1953), 97.

Ottoman activity in the North Caucasus.⁵⁶ In 1519, Temrük and Kızıltaş forts at the mouth of the Kuban River and Janey (Ot. Cane) fort in the south of the Taman peninsula were constructed to strengthen the Ottoman control over the Circassian tribes in the region.⁵⁷ With these conquests and construction of new forts, Black Sea shipping and shores were under effective Ottoman control by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

While the Ottomans were furthering their conquests in the Black Sea area, the Safavid dynasty, which would be influential in the affairs of the North Caucasus, emerged in Tabriz, Azerbaijan in 1501. It became the flag-bearer of Shi'a Islam and thus emerged as a natural rival to the Sunni Ottoman Empire. The Safavids united Iran and Azerbaijan and ruled these lands until their demise in 1736.⁵⁸ In spite of some territorial losses, Safavid Iran survived the struggle with the Ottomans, only to be overthrown within Iran proper and replaced by Nadir Shah.⁵⁹ As far as the Caucasus region was concerned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Safavids were mostly active in southern polities of Daghestan and in the eastern parts of the Georgian and Armenian lands.

⁵⁶ Ahmet Uğur, "Yavuz Sultan Selim ile Kırım Hanı Mengli Giray ve oğlu Muhammed Giray arasında geçen iki konuşma," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi dergisi* 21 (1963), 357-61.

⁵⁷ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1966), 54; Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 45.

⁵⁸ Roger Savory's *Iran under the Safavids* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980) is one of the most comprehensive books on the Safavids dynasty of Iran. For a recent study on the Safavids, see Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006). For a general history and the place of the dynasty in the history of Iran, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6, eds. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge : University Press, 1986). Also see, Sibylla Schuster-Walser, *Das safawidische Persien im Spiegel europäischer Reiseberichte (1502-1722) Untersuchungen zur Wirtschafts und Handelspolitik* (Baden: Grimm, 1970); Metin Kunt, "Ottomans and Safavids: States, Statecraft, and Societies, 1500-1800," *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 191-207; Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁵⁹ Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 35-38.

Until the second half of the sixteenth century, the main areas of conflict between the Ottomans and Safavids were in the South Caucasus. The warfare between these empires that had started in 1514 ended in 1555 with the first official treaty, the Treaty of Amasya, signed during the reigns of Süleyman I of the Ottoman Empire and Tahmasp I of the Safavids.⁶⁰ According to this document, Ottoman annexation of Iraq and suzerainty over Eastern Anatolia were recognized by the Safavids. Moreover, the western Georgian kingdoms (Imereti, Goria, Mingrelia) and western Armenia were left under the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan while the eastern Georgian kingdoms (Kartli and Kakheti) and eastern Armenia remained under the Safavid shah.⁶¹ Therefore, the initial warfare between the Ottomans and Safavids and the following peace treaty effectively divided the South Caucasus into western and eastern sections dominated by Ottomans and Safavids respectively. This peace treaty would be in effect until 1578 when the Ottomans started a campaign in the east, which would last for 12 years and much involve the North Caucasus.

The Crimean Khanate, as a contender for the Golden Horde territories, claimed suzerainty over the North Caucasus lands as far as the Caspian Sea. The Ottoman Porte recognized and respected the Crimean claims. It was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Porte found itself more and more involved in the affairs of the North Caucasus. Although the Ottoman-Crimean control was reasonably effective over some of the Adyghe lands, Kabarda and Daghestan were only under nominal claim and never completely under the control of the Ottomans until the second half of the sixteenth century. From the Crimean Tatar perspective, raiding was always a welcome option and as nominal overlords; the

⁶⁰ M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas ellerini fethi (1451-1590)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 243.

⁶¹ Ibid., 245-49.

Crimean khans received tribute in the form of slaves from the Circassians and sent some of them to the Porte.⁶² In the first half of the sixteenth century, especially during the reign of Sahib Girey I (r. 1532-1551), the Crimean army raided the North Caucasus four times in large scale, in 1539, 1542, 1544, and 1551.⁶³ There were many smaller raids in addition to these campaigns.⁶⁴ The campaigns in 1539 and 1542 were carried out to subdue the Janey Circassians. The Crimean Tatars enslaved thousands of Circassians and destroyed the Circassian armies. In 1544, they raided Kabarda, enslaving thousands of Kabardinians and tearing down churches in that region. In his last campaign in the North Caucasus, Khan Sahib Girey I attacked the Janey and the Kabardinians in 1551. Again thousands of Circassians were enslaved and their lands were devastated.⁶⁵ Sahib Girey I was one of the most ambitious Crimean khans. He was also interested in the Nogay affairs and strived to control them more tightly and eventually subordinate them to the khanate. On the other hand, the Nogays were intent to contain the growing power of the Crimean khans in the steppes and therefore allied themselves in the 1530s with the khanate of Astrakhan and Kazan and later with Muscovy against the Crimean Khanate. In 1546, a Nogay attack on the Crimea was stopped by the Crimean Tatar army and the Nogay army was violently annihilated, which further deteriorated already strained relationship between the Crimeans and the Nogays. Therefore, it can be said that by the mid-sixteenth century, the eastern campaigns of the

⁶² Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han: Historie de Sahib Giray, Khan de Crimée de 1532 à 1551*, [with French translation by M. Le Roux], ed. Özalp Gökbilgin (Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1973), 39, 76.

⁶³ Victor Ostapchuk, "Crimean Tatar Long-Range Campaigns: The View from Remmal Khoja's *The History of Sahib Girey Khan*," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 29 (2005): 271-87, esp. 275-77, 280-83; Özalp Gökbilgin, *1532-1577 yılları arasında Kırım Hanlığı'nın siyasi durumu* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1973), 18-22, 26-29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 39; K. F. Dzamikhov, *Adygi v politike Rossii na Kavkaze: 1550-e-nachalo 1770-kh gg.* (Nalchik: El-Fa, 2001), 260.

⁶⁵ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 39, 76.

Crimean Tatars brought about discontent with the Crimean rule in the North Caucasus and resistance from the Nogays. It was in this period that local North Caucasus polities and the Nogays were ready to enter into negotiations with any power that could oppose and protect them from the Crimean Khanate.

The history of Eurasia took an interesting turn in 1552 when Muscovy captured and annexed the Khanate of Kazan. This event marked the beginning of transition of power in the Eurasian steppes from Turkic hordes and states to Muscovy. 1552 also marked the beginning of Muscovy's imperial career because it was the first time Muscovy conquered a non-Russian sovereign state and a center of its former Tatar overlords.⁶⁶ Following the annexation of Kazan, except the Crimean Khanate other remnants of the former Golden Horde were to be first controlled and then annexed by Muscovy in a relatively short period of time. As a matter of fact, the only formidable power that rivalled Muscovy for the lands of the Golden Horde in the sixteenth century was the Crimean Khanate.

Muscovy and the Crimean Khanate were not always rivals. In fact, the reign of Mengli Girey which began in 1468 saw the first attempts to establish an alliance with Muscovy against the Great Horde of Seyyid Ahmed, which was a threat both to Muscovy and Mengli Girey. The reason was that the Great Horde supported Mengli Girey's elder brother, Nurdevlet, in his bid to the khanate's throne. In 1478, this struggle came to an end when Mengli Girey was installed on the throne with Ottoman help and as an Ottoman vassal. This event also marked the end of Great Horde's ambitions in the north of the Black Sea.⁶⁷ After

⁶⁶ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3-4.

⁶⁷ İnalçık, "Yeni vesikalara göre," 228-29.

this, Mengli Girey continued a policy of friendship and alliance with Muscovy against the Great Horde and Poland-Lithuania who had formed their own counter axis.⁶⁸ It was also Mengli Girey who initiated diplomatic relations between Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ The Porte supported its new vassal, Mengli Girey, in his struggle against the Great Horde. Eventually, the Crimean-Muscovite alliance delivered the final blow to the Great Horde in 1502 when the Crimean army captured the city of Saray.⁷⁰ As soon as the threat from the horde was eradicated, the rivalry between these two allies surfaced. In 1507, Mengli Girey approached Lithuania-Poland for forming an alliance against Muscovy and in the 1520s the Crimean Tatars began raiding southern Muscovy. At this point it should be noted that in spite of the rivalry and enmity between Muscovy and the Crimea, the former continued to pay the latter an annual tribute/gifts until the reign of Peter I in the eighteenth century, mostly to prevent Tatar raids on its southern frontier.⁷¹

The Crimean Khanate and Muscovy were militarily the strongest and most plausible competitors for the Golden Horde lands in the sixteenth century. The Khanate of Kazan was fragmented by internal strife, and reduced to a near vassal status already during the reign of Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III. The Khanate of Astrakhan was a latecomer and in no

⁶⁸ Janet Martin, "Muscovite Relations with the Khanates of Kazan and Crimea (1460s to 1512)," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 17 (1983), 442-43.

⁶⁹ Halil İnalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and the Don-Volga Canal (1569)," *Annales del'Universite d'Ankara* 1 (1947): 47-55; Robert M. Croskey, *Muscovite Diplomatic Practice in the Reign of Ivan III* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 129.

⁷⁰ I.V. Zaitsev, *Mezhdru Moskvoy i Stambulom: Dzhuchidskie gosudarstva, Moskva i Osmanskaia imperiia* (Moscow: Rudomino, 2004), 99-112.

⁷¹ Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 40; Halil İnalcık, "Power Relations between Russia, the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature," in *Turco-Tatar Past Soviet Present: Studies Presented to Alexandre Benningsen*, ed. Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, and E. Wimbush (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 175-215.

position to undertake a struggle against the Crimean Tatars or Muscovy. The Crimean-Muscovite competition over the lands of the Golden Horde that started after 1502 lasted for almost a century. In 1521, Crimean Khan Mehmed Girey I (r. 1515-1523) was successful in installing his son, Sahib Girey, on the throne of Kazan. Thus, the Girey dynasty in 1521 managed to unite the khanates of Kazan and the Crimea. Sahib Girey, who left Kazan for Istanbul in 1524 with the hope of becoming a khan in the Crimea, was later replaced by Sefa Girey, who ruled the Khanate of Kazan until 1532 when he was deposed by a pro-Muscovite khan, Jan Ali. Twice more Sefa Girey would gain power in Kazan until his final dethronement by the pro-Muscovite faction in 1549.⁷²

The same year when Sefa Girey was dethroned, Khan Sahib Girey I of the Crimea (r. 1532-1551) captured Astrakhan with the support of Ottoman soldiers and weapons.⁷³ Khan Yağmurcu of Astrakhan left the city and took refuge with the Nogays. The Porte, however, was not pleased with Sahib Girey's taking over the Khanate of Astrakhan. He was ordered to return Astrakhan to Khan Yağmurcu and retreat his forces. Interestingly, it was the Ottoman sultan who willingly hampered the Crimean Tatar struggle for the Golden Horde lands against Muscovy by dethroning Sahib Girey in 1551 due to the complaints of some Ottomans officials about Sahib Girey's ambitious policies in the north and the danger he could pose to the Porte in the future.⁷⁴ However, it proved to be an ill-advised moment for the Ottomans to impinge on the Crimean politics as Muscovite Tsar Ivan IV reached his long awaited prize and annexed Kazan in 1552—one year after the dethronement of Sahib Girey—and

⁷² Akdes Nimet Kurat, *IV-XVIII. yüzyıllarda Karadeniz kuzeyindeki Türk kavimleri ve devletleri* (Ankara: Murat Kitabevi yayınları, 1992), 173-74.

⁷³ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Girey Han*, 115-132.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

Astrakhan in 1556. Most of the Nogay *mirzas* had already become clients of Muscovy before 1552, mostly due to the successful Muscovite policy of co-optation and the Nogays' resentment with ambitious Crimean khans who tried to control them. The pro-Muscovite fraction of the Nogays and their services rendered for the Muscovite tsar or, in some cases, at least their neutrality in the conflicts between Muscovy and the khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Crimea to a great extent facilitated the Muscovite annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan. In 1555, pro-Muscovite İsmail Bey became the bey of the Nogay Horde, igniting more conflicts among the ruling *mirzas* and eventually splitting the Nogays into two hordes.⁷⁵ Thus, by 1556 Muscovy added to its realm the heartland of the former Golden Horde—the Volga basin as far as the Caspian Sea in the south.

With the Muscovite annexations and control over the Greater Nogays, the Ottomans were to face a rising power to be counted with in the north. Muscovy gained considerable gravity and became closer to being an equal rival to the other powers in the north. As such, the balance of power between Muscovy, Lithuania-Poland, and the Crimean Khanate was tipped in favour of Muscovy. And, Muscovite ambitions did not end here. The transition of Muscovy from a grand principality and a second-rate power to a tsardom with Chinggisid ambitions in the 1550s prompted the North Caucasus polities that had been oppressed by the policies of Khan Sahib Girey and frustrated with Ottoman attempts at establishing direct rule, which included its taxation system, to approach to the Muscovite tsar. Muscovy, seeming relatively better option for the North Caucasus chiefs, geographically was far from the region. It did not appear capable of posing an immediate threat to independence of the North Caucasus rulers; instead it could offer an opportunity to counteract the Crimean dominance

⁷⁵ *Posol'skie knigi po sviaziam Rossii*, 72-76.

over the region. Considering these, the North Caucasus rulers sent their envoys to the tsar as early as 1552.

The first envoys were from the Adyghe. And in 1557, the Kabardinian chiefs sent their envoys. The tsar accepted their submission, but he was specifically interested in Kabarda as it offered a passage to the South Caucasus, namely the Daryal Pass, and compared to Daghestan it was a soft target. Meanwhile, in the late 1550s and early 1560s, combined forces of Zaporozhian Cossacks of Prince Dmytro Vyshnevestkyi, who had entered into the service of the tsar, and Adyghe and Kabardinian Circassians terrorized the Ottoman/Crimean possessions in the North Caucasus and nearby Black Sea coasts. In addition to these, in 1566, Ivan IV further accepted his Kabardinian subjects' petition to erect a fort in Kabarda and in 1567 the Sunzha, at the confluence of the Sunzha and Terek rivers, was completed.⁷⁶

A Muscovite fort in the heart of the North Caucasus alarmed the Porte. The Ottomans and the Crimean khan considered its establishment as a direct occupation of a territory under their sovereignty. Furthermore, in 1552 the Safavids established diplomatic relations with Muscovy. The Ottomans were aware of these relations and feared that a possible alliance between the Safavids and Muscovites would cause many problems for them in the Caucasus.⁷⁷ Although Muscovy was willing to advance its imperial gains in the Caucasus in

⁷⁶ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (henceforth PSRL), *Lietopisnii sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarshei ili Nikonovskoi letopis* (St. Petersburg, 1904; Reprint, Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 13:405; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 13.

⁷⁷ Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests," *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2003), 105; P. P. Bushev, *Istoriia posolstv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii Russkogo i Iranskogo gosudarstv v 1586-1612 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 39.

the 1560s, it was also involved in the costly Livonian War in the Baltic region.⁷⁸ Moreover, there were constant Crimean raids instigated by the Polish king in 1563-65 and in 1568-74. In addition to these external engagements, Muscovite domestic policy was in ruins. In 1565, Tsar Ivan IV initiated the *oprichnina*, which was a period of political oppression and terror against the boyars and public to reduce power of the former and increase the autocratic powers of the tsar. The period lasted from 1565 until its abolition by Ivan IV himself in 1572. During the *oprichnina*, aside from the power of the boyars being undermined and Muscovite populations being terrorized, the social balance and mechanisms that made Muscovy powerful were disturbed.⁷⁹ Due to these international and domestic problems, Muscovy did not wish to see any serious conflicts in its southern/steppe frontiers, especially ones that involved the Ottoman Empire. However, its activities in the southern arc up to the late 1560s were already enough to cause a reaction at the Porte. At this point, it should be pointed out that the historical narrative below is given as an overview and summary of the events that will be explained and analyzed in depth in the following chapters.

The main circumstance that prompted the Ottoman Porte to take action as soon as its western and eastern frontiers became relatively secure were indeed the Muscovite ambitions in the North Caucasus following their annexation of Astrakhan. Moreover, several local rulers from the North Caucasus who found their positions vulnerable against other rulers

⁷⁸ For the Muscovite warfare in the Baltic see Robert I. Frost, *The Northern Wars: War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1558-1721* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), esp. 23-62; Walther Kirchner, *The Rise of the Baltic Question* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1954); Erich Donnert, *Der livländische Ordensritterstaat und Russland; der Livländische Krieg und die baltische Frage in der europäischen Politik 1558-1583* (Berlin: Rütten and Loening, 1963).

⁷⁹ For a short description of the period see R. G. Skrynnikov and Hugh Graham, "An overview of the reign of Ivan IV: What was the 'Oprichnina'?" *Soviet Studies in History* 24 (1985): 62-82; for a more comprehensive study see A. A. Zimin, *Oprichnina* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Territorii, 2001).

supported by Muscovy appealed to the Porte and the Crimean khan.⁸⁰ In 1569, the Porte sent an army ostensibly to dig a canal to connect the Don and Volga rivers and to capture Astrakhan under the command of Kasim Pasha of Kefe. Muscovy at this time approached the Safavid shah in the hope of forming an alliance against the Ottomans, but Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1525-1576) was careful not to provoke the Ottomans. Despite receiving weapons from Muscovy including 400 muskets, Shah Tahmasp refused participate in an anti-Ottoman alliance.⁸¹

In 1569 relatively small Ottoman army supported by the Crimean Tatars failed to take Astrakhan and returned back to Kefe across the North Caucasus steppe in a disastrous retreat. Engaged in the western frontiers and in domestic affairs, the Muscovite tsar preferred not to provoke the Ottomans further and sent an envoy in 1570 to settle the issues that had caused the Porte to take offensive. As for the Ottomans, although the failure of the Astrakhan campaign weakened the position of those who favoured further and active northern involvements in the Porte, especially that of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, it became a turning point for the Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus and in the north. After the failure of the Astrakhan campaign, officials in the Porte convinced the sultan that a campaign to capture Cyprus would be more profitable and appropriate.

However, the Ottomans would not forget to punish the North Caucasus chiefs and tribes that caused problems before and during the Astrakhan campaign. In 1570, a Crimean army entered Kabarda, where the returning Ottoman soldiers had been attacked by the

⁸⁰ C. Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 27; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, LXIV.

⁸¹ Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns," 108; Bushev, *Istoriia posolstv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*, 44.

Circassians, and soundly defeated the pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs.⁸² A year later, with Ottoman encouragement and support, Khan Devlet Girey reached the gates of Moscow in a daring reprisal raid and burnt most of the city itself forcing Ivan IV to leave capital.⁸³ For the Muscovites, this Tatar raid was reminiscent of the Golden Horde years. At this point, it should be reminded that in 1570 the bulk of the Muscovite army was still fighting in the Livonian War, which would continue until 1583. That is why the Crimean Tatar army easily infiltrated into the heartland of Muscovy. However, all of these new developments caused the once strong Muscovite influence in the North Caucasus to fade in a very short time. The pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs were purged by the Crimean Tatars. With this, once more in the 1570s Kabarda and Adyghe parts of the North Caucasus accepted the suzerainty of the Crimean khan.⁸⁴ Moreover, sporadic Crimean raids into the Muscovite lands continued in the second half of the sixteenth century and the Ottoman Porte continued to support these raids.

Meanwhile in 1576, Safavid Shah Tahmasp I died and was replaced by his son, İsmail II (r. 1576-1577). Tahmasp's death and subsequent confusion over the throne in the Safavid Iran offered an opportunity for the Porte to conquer the Caucasus and reduce the Safavids to a second-rate power. The Ottoman-Safavid War started in 1578. In the beginning, Ottoman armies quickly invaded the South Caucasus and Azerbaijan. These newly conquered areas were organized into several *beylerbeyliks* (governor-generalships), an indication that the Porte intended to stay in the Caucasus. These provinces were Tiflis, Kakhet, Shirvan, Sokhum, Çıldır, Kars, Revan, Loru, Tumanis, Göri, Gence/Karabağ. Later, in 1583 upon the

⁸² *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, LXXVI-LXXVIII.

⁸³ Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Les Expéditions de Devlet Girây contre Moscou en 1571 et 1572, d'après les documents des Archives ottomanes," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 13 (1972), 555-59.

⁸⁴ Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 56.

advice of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha Shirvan was divided into three provinces as Ereş, Derbend, and Şemahı.⁸⁵ The value of the North Caucasus for the Porte increased during the Safavid war because of the Ottoman supply route that went from Kefe to Derbend through Kabarda and Daghestan. At this time, especially compared to its laxer North Caucasus policy in the first half of the sixteenth century, the Porte greatly strengthened its control of this region. The Porte also managed to enlist Urus Bey of the Greater Nogays on its side and in 1578 his forces joined the Ottoman army against the Safavids. Establishment of permanent Ottoman provinces in the South Caucasus and effective Ottoman control of the North Caucasus was fatal to the objectives of Muscovy in the Caucasus and even potentially so to its position in the lower Volga area. Because of this, Muscovites renewed their attempts to find allies and vassals in Kabarda. The Kabardinian chiefs were also suspicious of Ottoman designs in the North Caucasus. With increasing Ottoman presence in the area, they were afraid of losing their independence and even autonomy. The Ottoman presence was different than their experience with the Crimeans as the Ottomans were in the Caucasus to stay and establish their order. This led the Kabardinian chiefs to appeal to Muscovy once more. In 1577, they requested that the Muscovite tsar erect a fort in Kabarda.⁸⁶ By 1578 and 1580, just as the Ottoman-Safavid War was beginning, two Muscovite forts were constructed in Kabarda along the Terek River. Moreover, during this war one of the greatest dangers for the Ottomans armies on their way to Derbend through the North Caucasus was the Don and Terek Cossacks. The Cossacks were actively collaborating with the Muscovite forces along the Terek, Sunzha, and Koysu rivers. They disrupted the Ottoman supply traffic in the North

⁸⁵ Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas ellerini fethi*, 304-5.

⁸⁶ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35.

Caucasus and in 1583 even attacked the forces of Osman Pasha en route from Derbend to Kefe. We know from Ottoman sources that Osman Pasha's forces fought three days with the Cossacks and tried to destroy the Muscovite forts along the Terek on their way.⁸⁷

In the 1580s, Muscovy was also active to the south of the Caucasian mountains. Like the Kabardinian and Adyghe chiefs, King Alexander II of Kakheti also considered the Muscovite tsar a possible protector against Ottoman or Safavid aggression or against Daghestani raids. He received a letter from the tsar in 1586 and an envoy in 1587. In the latter year, he officially recognized the tsar as his sovereign and swore allegiance to him.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Safavid shah had been trying to convince the Muscovites to form an alliance against the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus. In 1588, his envoys along with the envoy of Alexander II travelled to Moscow.⁸⁹ Muscovite activities in the North and now also in the South Caucasus once again prompted the Ottomans to take direct action against Muscovy. In 1587, the Ottomans decided to undertake another campaign in the north to capture Astrakhan and to deliver the final blow to the Muscovite encroachment in the Caucasus and lower Volga. In the same year, Urus Bey of the Greater Nogays and Khan Abdullah of the Uzbeks also petitioned the sultan for a campaign to take Astrakhan in the same year.⁹⁰ The campaign was planned for the spring of 1588 and necessary orders were sent in this regard. In response to Ottoman preparations for a campaign, Muscovy constructed another fortress in 1588 at the

⁸⁷ Asafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2006), 377-78.

⁸⁸ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 128.

⁸⁹ Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns," 109; Bushev, *Istoriia posolstv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii*, 63-64.

⁹⁰ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri mühimme defteri* (henceforth MD) 62, nos. 230, 231.

mouth of the Terek.⁹¹ The fortress was intended to check the Ottoman forces before they approached Astrakhan. However, due to the Safavid war in the South Caucasus and Azerbaijan, the Porte did not realize the planned campaign. Perhaps encouraged by this, the Muscovites continued to build more forts in the North Caucasus in the early years of the 1590s.

The Ottomans and Safavids signed a peace treaty in March 1590 ending the warfare that had lasted for 12 years. The new Safavid Shah Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) recognized Ottoman sovereignty in the Caucasus and in southern Azerbaijan.⁹² As soon as the war in the eastern frontier ended, the Porte had to undertake another war in the western frontier against the Habsburgs that started in 1593 and continued till 1606. As for Muscovy, it was engaged in warfare against Sweden between 1590 and 1595. Yet, at the same time, Muscovites intensified their efforts to dominate the North Caucasus from Kabarda as far as the northern parts of Daghestan. At this time, Alexander II of Kakheti, the new vassal of the tsar in the Caucasus, continuously petitioned that the tsar to send an army against the *shamkhal*.⁹³

Upon the tsar's orders, Voivoda of the Terek fortress Alexander Zasekin attacked the lands of the *shamkhal* in 1592. His army included Kabardinian subjects of Muscovy as well as Cossacks.⁹⁴ The Muscovites continued their forward strategy in Daghestan and captured Tarku in 1593. The Ottomans acted quickly as one of their important vassals was in very

⁹¹ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 60.

⁹² Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran siyasi münasebetleri* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1962), 193-98; Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas elli'ni fethi*, 375-89.

⁹³ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 128, 146, and 174.

⁹⁴ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 278; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 253-54.

vulnerable situation. They supported the *shamkhal* with men and weapons from their province of Şemahı. A united army of the Daghestanis supported by the Ottoman forces from Şemahı managed to re-take Tarku and routed the Muscovite army in 1594.⁹⁵

Due to the fact that the Ottomans were waging a costly war against the Habsburgs and the new Safavid shah was likely to attack the lands in the South Caucasus recently conquered by the Ottomans, the Porte was reluctant to revive the plans to take offensive against Muscovy and instead decided for the time being to maintain the status quo in the North Caucasus. Muscovy was also in no position to try to alter the status quo. In 1598, the last Rurikid tsar of Muscovy, Fyodor Ivanovich (r. 1584-1598) died and Boris Godunov, who was *de facto* maker of Muscovite foreign policy during Fyodor's reign, usurped the Muscovite throne.⁹⁶ Later in 1603 and as expected by the Porte, Shah Abbas I of the Safavids started a new war against the Ottomans to re-take what had belonged to the Safavid Iran before 1578. The fact that the Ottoman Empire was fighting on both frontiers offered a chance for the Muscovites to realize their strategic objectives in Daghestan. In March 1604, Tsar Boris Godunov sent an army to Daghestan and Kabarda under the command of Ivan Baturlin and Vasilii Pleshcheev. The Muscovite army again took Tarku and Koysu in the same year. In spite of the wars with the Safavids and Habsburgs, the Porte commanded the governor-general of Şemahı to assist the *shamkhal* and the Daghestanis.⁹⁷ The Daghestani-Ottoman forces re-took Tarku in the spring of 1605 and annihilated what remained of the Muscovite army including its commanders, Baturlin and Pleshcheev. This defeat came just as

⁹⁵ MD 69, no. 147.

⁹⁶ See S. F. Platonov, *Boris Godunov* (Prague: Plamia, 1924) and Daniel H. Shubin, *Tsars and Imposters: Russia's Time of Troubles* (New York: Algora Publications, 2009).

⁹⁷ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 288; Lemerrier-Quelquijay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 40.

Tsar Godunov died and was replaced by his young son. Indeed, Muscovy was then entering the Time of Troubles that would last until the election of the first Romanov tsar in 1613.⁹⁸ Therefore, 1605 marks the last involvement of Muscovy in the affairs of the North Caucasus. The next challenge from the north would be the Russian Empire during the reign of Peter I (the Great) in 1722.

The war that started in 1603 between the Ottomans and Safavids continued until August 1611. Shah Abbas I was successful in re-taking most of the territories that had been conquered by the Ottomans in 1578-1590. However, with the Treaty of Istanbul, signed in 1611, the Safavids recognized the Ottoman sovereignty in western Georgia and in the North Caucasus including Daghestan. It is important to note that the North Caucasus was included in the treaty, which had never been an issue in the previous treaties with the Safavids. Except for the North Caucasus and Daghestan and some territories in Georgia, the Safavid-Ottoman border was the same as the borders agreed in 1555 with the Treaty of Amasya. At the end of the first round of the imperial rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy that ended in the early years of the 1600s, it was the Ottoman Empire that was in control in the North Caucasus.

⁹⁸ On the time of troubles in Muscovy see S. F. Platonov's *The Time of Troubles: A Historical Study of the Internal Crisis and Social Struggle in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Muscovy*, trans. John T. Alexander (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1970).

CHAPTER 2

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE NORTH CAUCASUS

An overview of the sixteenth-century North Caucasus and important events in and around the region has been presented in the previous chapter. Building upon this main narrative, the present chapter investigates Ottoman northern policy in the context of the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569 and the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590—both of which were pivotal moments that directly affected the political situation and balance of power in the North Caucasus and prompted the Porte to alter its northern policy. In addition to this, why the Ottoman Porte felt the need to modify its northern policy in the second half of the sixteenth century and how a true northern policy came into being will be dealt with. The aforementioned campaigns not only brought about important changes in the policy of the Porte, but also influenced the political and social conditions of the local peoples of the North Caucasus. In order to better understand what the North Caucasus meant for the Porte it is worth taking a brief look at the perception of the North Caucasus and the north in general by Ottoman officials

The North Caucasus was a part of the Ottoman Empire's northern frontiers that stretched from Poland-Lithuania to the lower Volga. As such, the region was probably considered within broader Ottoman northern policy, which was mostly based on the personal standpoints of the influential officials at the Porte and the conflicts between them. Before

Muscovite involvement in the region, the Ottoman Porte preferred to apply a manipulative policy whose main objective was to maintain its exclusive control over the Black Sea. While establishing order and creating administrative districts along the Black Sea shores, the Ottomans trusted the Crimean khan to see the affairs of the North Caucasus and the steppes to the north. As for communication with the steppe powers, the Porte preferred to use conceit of being far from the steppes despite the fact that it felt and often urgent need for their support. This fact is stated in 1551 by Süleyman I in his letter to İsmail, the Mirza of the Nogays. Just before the imminent capture of Kazan by Muscovy, he wrote, “We are all Muslims and we should unite against Moscow...and you should help Kazan and Azov (sic), which are too far away for me to aid; then I shall make you a khan in Azov.”¹ İsmail Mirza was the staunchest ally of Muscovy among the Nogays. In his pro-Russian policies, he was opposed by his brother, Yusuf Mirza, but in 1555 emerged victorious in this struggle. Süleyman also wrote to Yusuf Mirza and in 1548 recognized him as the *emirü'l-umera* (the supreme commander) of the Nogays.² Thus, arguments claiming that the Ottomans were fully unaware of the situation in the north and the rise of Muscovy, as supported by Turkish historian Akdes Nimet Kurat, do not hold up under scrutiny.³ Süleyman I and some Ottoman officials were obviously aware of the situation in the north and tried to enlist local rulers on their side in the continuing struggle for the Golden Horde territories. Among these officials

¹ *Prodolzhenie drevnei rossiiskoi vivliofiki* (St. Petersburg, 1793; reprint, The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 8:265-67; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 35; N. A. Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsialno-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1958), 24. Indeed, Azov (Ottoman: Azak) in the text should be read “Astrakhan.”

² Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkili Türkistan ve yakın tarihi* (Istanbul: Güven Basımevi, 1947), 34-35; Akdes N. Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1966), 59.

³ See Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, esp. 45-50.

Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, who would become the Grand Vizier in 1565 and *de facto* rule the empire after Süleyman I's death in the following year, was the strongest supporter of an active Ottoman policy in the north.

Süleyman I's knowledge of the northern affairs must have been sufficient enough to understand the possible danger that Muscovy could pose for the Crimea and for the Ottoman possessions in the north. Khan Sahib Girey, who was following a fierce anti-Muscovite policy in the north, was a close friend of Süleyman I.⁴ He had even been the khan of Kazan (r. 1521-1524) before he became the khan of the Crimean Khanate (r. 1532-1551). He met Süleyman I several times during the Ottoman campaigns in Central Europe and they seem to have had some long conversations together.⁵ Thus, though he was likely informed about the north, the Muscovites and their ambitions, he must have thought that the danger was not overly serious and could be dealt with at some time in the future after the eastern and western frontiers were stabilized. We understand from Süleyman's letter to the Nogays that the Porte was unable to actively interfere in the developments in the north for the time being. Instead it tried to prevent the fall of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan by forming an alliance of Muslim polities in the region against Muscovy or at least by neutralizing the Nogays, who were in alliance with Muscovy. It is certain that the Porte did not prefer a stronger Crimean Khanate to take over Kazan and Astrakhan thus uniting the former Golden Horde territories under a single Chinggisid ruler. Such a neighbor to the north must have seemed much more serious than a Muscovy that had conquered Kazan and Astrakhan. The Crimean Khanate as a

⁴ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han: Historie de Sahib Giray, Khan de Crimée de 1532 à 1551*, [with French translation by M. Le Roux], ed. Özalp Gökbilgin (Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1973), 29-31; Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 42-3.

⁵ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 29-31.

stronger, Chinggisid, and Muslim power controlling Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Nogays would likely be a direct rival and a great threat to the Ottoman Empire in Eurasia. However, the Ottomans had no intention of accepting the Muscovite take-over of Kazan and Astrakhan either. As W. E. D. Allen points out, Süleyman I agreed to sign a peace treaty with the Safavids on June 1, 1555 right after the effective occupation of the Khanate of Astrakhan by Muscovy and this could be an indication of his plans for a campaign in the north.⁶

As indicated above, as a part of the northern frontiers, the North Caucasus affairs were mostly left to the Crimean khan except for the Adyghe affairs in the Taman Peninsula. The Ottoman governors in the area, the *sancakbeys* of Kefe (Ukrainian: Feodosiya) and Azak (Russian: Azov), encouraged submission of local Adyghe chiefs to the Porte due to their close proximity to Ottoman possessions and in line with the Ottoman notion of centrally administrating the Black Sea coasts. After the capture of Taman in 1479 and the construction of the fortress of Temrük in 1516, the Ottomans were effectively able to control some of the Circassian tribes living in the close vicinity of these fortresses.

Most of these local rulers were Janeys, the strongest group in the northwestern Caucasus. The Porte provided them with standards of investiture, which typically included a golden banner, drum, and robes of honor (*hil'at*), as well as the title of *sancakbey*, which included a salary.⁷ Moreover, some of the Adyghe chiefs were paid annuities without any titles. Such sorts of annuities were usually paid from the revenues of Kefe.⁸ In fact, the

⁶ W. E. D. Allen, *Problems of Turkish Power in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1963), 23.

⁷ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 39.

⁸ Order to the governor of Kefe (November 1565), *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA) mühimme defteri* (henceforth MD) 5, no. 495 [5 numaralı mühimme defteri, 973/1565, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara:

number of Adyghe chiefs who were allocated salaries from Kefe was quite high in second half of the sixteenth century. At one point in 1564, the governor of Kefe wrote to the Porte that many Circassian chiefs were coming to Kefe to ask for permission to visit Istanbul to submit to the sultan and request a salary. The Porte responded that the governor should not to allow any more Circassian chiefs to come to Istanbul without obtaining its prior permission.⁹ In 1578, for example, salaries paid from the revenue of Kefe to the Circassian chiefs, including Adyghe and Kabardinian chiefs, amounted to 1,206,274 *akçe* and in 1579 it rose to 1,918,480 *akçe*.¹⁰ Moreover, some of these Circassian chiefs could even be granted revenues from other parts of the empire. One of the Janey chiefs, for example, was given a timar from the revenue of Aleppo (Ottoman: Haleb).¹¹ As we understand from the Ottoman documents, Adyghe rulers receiving salaries from the Porte were mostly obedient. However, it was not unusual for some of them to switch sides. To illustrate, in 1565 the same Janey chief, who was given a salary from the revenue of Aleppo, rebelled against the Porte and joined the Zaporozhian Cossacks of Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi.¹²

Being in close proximity to Ottoman possessions, the Janey were even registered for taxes and in 1539 asked to pay *cizye* as non-Muslim Ottoman subjects by the order of the

Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1994)]; Order to the governor of Kefe (August 1564), MD 6, no. 37 [6 numaralı mühimme defteri, 972/1564-1565, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1995)].

⁹ MD 6, no. 37. It is not indicated in this document whether these Circassian chiefs who visited or wished to visit Istanbul converted to Islam or not. However, it is safe to assume that they did, because it was a normal procedure that those rulers who converted to Islam would visit the Porte for more rewards and titles. In addition to these, we learn from this document that the sancakbey sent 18 Cossack slaves to the Porte.

¹⁰ M. Sadık Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Eren, 2005), 87.

¹¹ Order to the governor of Kefe (April 1560), MD 3, no. 961 [3 numaralı mühimme Defteri, 966-968/1558-1560, ed. Necati Aktaş et al. (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1995)].

¹² Ibid.; Order to the governor of Kefe (November 1565), MD 5, no. 495. For more information about Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi see footnote 29.

governor of Kefe, Halil Bey.¹³ Theoretically their registration made the Janey's Ottoman subjects who were to be protected as long as they were loyal to the Porte. To illustrate, in 1565 when several of a Janey chief's subjects were attacked by non-Muslims Circassians in the Taman region and enslaved, an order was sent to the governor of Kefe to prevent such raids against Ottoman subjects and never allow slave merchants to buy or sell these Circassians as slaves. The imperial order was sent upon the request of Janey Chief Mustafa who had sent a man to the Porte with a petition saying, "[may] slave merchants be warned that people of his (Mustafa's) *sancak* who are sold as slaves are not to be purchased. Following the warning, his people are to be freed regardless of who owns them."¹⁴ The governor was ordered to find those people who were enslaved after the Janey's submitted to the Porte and by all means free them. The Porte also asked him "to imprison those who enslaved these people" who were now Ottoman subjects.¹⁵ In another instance, the Porte ordered the Crimean khan and the governor of Kefe to capture those Circassian chiefs who oppressed their own Circassian subjects without creating disorder in the region of Taman.¹⁶ These documents indicate that the Ottomans tried to establish a degree of direct authority and rule of law especially among the Adyghes living in the Taman Peninsula. This was mainly because the Adyghes controlled an outlet to the Black Sea whose control was of utmost

¹³ Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 47.

¹⁴ MD 6, no. 623. (...*bazergan ta 'ifesine tenbih ü te 'kid oluna ki, sancagı re'ayasından; esirdür deyü bey' idenlerden almayub ba'de't-tenbih her kimün elinde re'ayasından bulunursa alınmasın 'ilam etmegin...*)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Order to the governor of Kefe (February 1566), MD 5, no. 994. The above-mentioned Circassian chiefs seized the herds of their own Circassian subjects in the Taman Peninsula.

importance to the Porte.¹⁷ Writing in the seventeenth century, Hezarfen Hüseyin's chronicle shows that the Ottomans succeeded in reaching their objectives regarding the Adyghe. Hezarfen says that the Janeyes were Muslims and they had *kadıs* appointed by the Porte, which was an indication of central authority.¹⁸

Indeed, being registered meant that they had to pay taxes, which caused disturbances among the Adyghe population in the Kuban-Taman region. Many times subdued Adyghe chiefs and "sipahis"¹⁹ appealed to the governor of Kefe and complained about these taxes: "We have been registered as subjects and asked to pay 'öşr and *resm-i çift*. However, we have no means of paying such taxes."²⁰ When their complaints fell on deaf ears, Circassian tribes tended to flee from their lands into the northwestern regions of the Caucasus mountainous where they could avoid being taxed given that neither the Ottomans nor the Crimean Tatars had been able to effectively control such areas. Orders were sent to Kefe and the Crimea in 1570-1571 so that the khan and Ottoman administrators would prevent such migrations from the Taman Peninsula and return those Circassians who escaped from their

¹⁷ On the Black Sea and the Ottomans, see Halil İnalcık, "The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans," *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 35 (1979): 74-110; Victor Ostapchuk, "The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the face of the Cossack Naval Raids," *Oriente Moderno* 20 (2001): 23-95; Victor Ostapchuk, *War and Diplomacy across Steppe and Sea: The Ottoman Black Sea Frontier in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs) (forthcoming); Victor Ostapchuk, "The Ottoman Black Sea Steppe Frontier and the Struggle for a New Order in Eastern Europe, 1648-1681," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhisü'l-beyan fî kavanin-i al-i Osman*, ed. Dr. Sevim İlgürel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998), 87.

¹⁹ Just as there was no timar system in the Crimean Khanate, there were no timariots in the Circassians lands. Again, important chiefs of certain polities or tribal confederations were given the title of *sancakbey* and a salary. However, sons of these chiefs, chiefs of lower status, or *uzdens* might have also been given titles that were at the level of *bölükbaşı* or *alaybeyi*. So-called *sipahis* in these texts may refer to the Circassian chiefs of lower status or *uzdens*. See Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 87.

²⁰ Order to the governor-general of Kefe (1571), MD 14, no. 1543. (*adada olan ümera-i Çerakise ve sipahiler vilayet katibi bizi ra'yyet kaydeyleyüb bedel-i 'öşr ve resm-i çift taleb idüb bunun emsali tekalife kadrimiz yokdur deyü re'ayayı idlal eyleyüb ta'un bahanesiyle adadan çıkub gitmek üzere oldukların...*)

homes: “As such, if the afore-mentioned people (Circassians) want to leave the island (Taman Peninsula), you should return them back to their homes, if possible, in peace and by applying *istimalet* ²¹ (the policy of reconciliation). If they do not comply and rebel, it is ordered that you punish them.”²² The dissatisfaction of the Adyghe chiefs and subjects as Ottoman subjects can be seen in such Ottoman documents in which they repeatedly appealed to the Porte or to the governor of Kefe saying that they were unable to pay taxes.

In spite of frequent tribal revolts or attacks on subjects of the Porte either from land or sea, most of the rulers in the North Caucasus going all the way east but not including the realm of Daghestani *shamkhals*, that is, the rulers of the Beshtav Circassians and Kabardinians, were under the strong and punitive hand of the khan or, depending on their proximity to Ottoman possessions and peaceful subordination, under the control of the Ottoman governors (especially the Janeys). The latter might have meant tax pressure as explained above.

The situation beyond the Beshtav region was more complicated but of less concern to the Porte. The Kabarda region was nominally considered to be under the sovereignty of the sultan through his Crimean vassal. At least before the beginning of Muscovite interest in Kabarda, the Porte had no intention of controlling Kabarda in a way that was similar to its control in the northwestern Caucasus over the Janeys, Besleneys, and Kemirkoys. This means that Daghestan and its rulers, the most prominent among them being the *shamkhal*,

²¹Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 18.

²²For example, order to the governor-general of Kefe and governor of Azak (May 1571), MD 12, nos. 534, 535; MD 14, nos. 1543, 1544. The text in these documents is as follows, (...*anun gibi ta 'ife-i mezbureden adadan çıkub gitmek isterlerse mümkün olduğu üzere teslimet ve istimalet ile yerlü yerlerine iskan itdürüb memnu' olmayub isyan iderlerse haklarından gelinmek emrüm olduğundan...*)

were poorly known by the Ottoman officials at that time due to the lesser degree of contact with them. This is how the North Caucasus was viewed at the Porte before the appearance of Muscovy in the region as a rival power in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The fall of Kazan and Astrakhan was alarming for the Ottomans. However, due to the reasons explained above, annexation of Astrakhan to the Ottoman Empire rather than allowing it to fall under the sway of the Crimean Khanate was the logical choice for the Porte. In this way, the Ottomans would keep their Crimean vassal under a stronger control, obtain a strategic upper-hand against the Safavids, and control the flow of commercial revenues from the region which was very high as stressed in the letters sent to the sultan by the Central Asian rulers and local Tatars.²³ This is why even though Khan Sahib Girey captured Astrakhan with the help of the Ottoman military in 1549, seven years earlier than Ivan IV of Muscovy, he was ordered to re-install Yağmurcu Khan of Astrakhan and withdraw his forces.²⁴ Moreover, his appeals to the Porte to help Kazan and Astrakhan fell on deaf ears and eventually he was deposed because the Porte found him to be too ambitious.²⁵ A Crimean chronicler of the sixteenth century Remmal Hoca writes that it was due to the intrigue of Ottoman officials that Sahib Girey was eventually deposed by the sultan. Some viziers influenced the sultan saying that being conceited about his Chinggisid

²³ Suret-i Name-i Harezm Han (December 1568), MD 7, no. 2723; Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, 79; Kurat, "The Turkish Expedition to Astrakhan in 1569 and the Problem of the Don- Volga Canal," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 40 (1961): 14; Halil İnalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and the Don-Volga Canal (1569), *Annales del'Universite d'Ankara* 1 (1947): 69. The revenues that Astrakhan would produce from international trade were considered very high by the Porte due to its location on the trade and pilgrimage routes. For its Turkish version, see İnalcık, "Osmanlı-Rus rekabetinin menşei ve Don-Volga kanalı teşebbüsü (1569)," *Belleten* 12 (1948): 349-402.

²⁴ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *IV-XVIII. yüzyıllarda Karadeniz kuzeyindeki Türk kavimleri ve devletleri* (Ankara: Murat Kitabevi yayınları, 1992), 277-78.

²⁵ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 115-32.

ancestry, Sahib Girey ignored the orders from the Porte and looked down on the Ottoman governors and viziers.²⁶

There were several other irritants that triggered a more active involvement in the north, and indeed an actual military campaign. One of them was the sudden and apparently close allegiance of some prominent local rulers in the North Caucasus with Muscovy starting as early as 1552 and most alarmingly, their raids alliance with the Zaporozhian Cossacks under Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi on the Ottoman territories. Moreover, the sultan considered it his duty to protect *dari'l-islam* territories and to steadily expand them. The annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan, both Sunni Muslim territories, by a non-Muslim state must have been a serious blow to the long-term expectation of continuing imperial conquest to expand the *dari'l-islam*. They had to listen to the appeals coming from Central Asian khanates about closure of the pilgrimage route by the Muscovites and from the local Tatars and Nogays about the duty of the caliph sultan to rescue them from the “infidel” Muscovites who destroyed their mosques and enslaved Muslims.²⁷

The Porte in fact planned to capture Astrakhan three times in the second half of the sixteenth century. The earliest occasion was in 1563 during the reign of Süleyman I when an order was sent to the Crimean khan who was ordered to muster his army for a campaign the next spring against Astrakhan.²⁸ However, due to the political situation in Central Europe

²⁶ Ibid., 115-32.

²⁷ Suret-i Name-i Harezmi Han and order to the Crimean Khan (December 1568), MD 7, nos. 2722, 2723.

²⁸ İnalçık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry,” 65-66. In February 1564, the Muscovite envoy to Crimea, A. F. Nagoi, wrote to Moscow that in September 1563 the Ottoman sultan sent an imperial letter to the Crimean khan ordering him to muster his armies for a campaign to take Astrakhan. According to the envoy’s report, the Crimean khan convinced the Ottoman sultan saying that he was on friendly terms with the Muscovite

and Crimean Khan Devlet Girey's negative attitude, this project had to be shelved. The second occasion was in 1569, when a campaign was actually carried out. The third, and the last one, was in 1587 when the plan was again abandoned due to the ongoing war with the Safavids and the situation on the western frontiers.

There is in fact a common thread that wove its way through the discussions and plans for the capture of Astrakhan by the Porte. In all three instances, there was a military threat supported by the Muscovite forces in Astrakhan. In 1563 and in 1569, it was the activities of the Ukrainian Cossack Prince Vyshnevetskyi with his Circassian allies, who received Muscovite support from Astrakhan as the Ottomans documents of the era indicate. In 1587, it was the Don Cossacks hindering the Ottoman effort, which included blocking/harassing the transportation route in the North Caucasus against the Safavids and operating with support from Muscovite controlled Astrakhan and also the presence of a Crimean candidate to the khanate, Murad Girey in Astrakhan, who was reported to be recruiting men to take over the Crimean Khanate. Thus Astrakhan was a natural target for the Porte.

2.1. The Road to Astrakhan: Towards a Mature Policy in the North

The Muscovite efforts for establishing its suzerainty over the North Caucasus intensified after their capture of Astrakhan in 1556. The Muscovites began to support Vyshnevetskyi, who targeted some Ottoman and Crimean possessions in the region such as fortresses of

tsar and a campaign to take Astrakhan would be futile. V. V. Ishin and I. V. Toropitsyn, eds., *Astrakhanskii kraj v istorii Rossii XVI-XXI vv.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Astrakhan: Astrakhanskii Universitet, 2007), 14.

Taman, Temrük, and Azak by supplying him money, weapons, and men.²⁹ As a result of these developments, normally restful or at least non-threatening Circassian tribes started to join the Cossacks of Vyshnevetskyi and attack Ottoman possessions in the north of the Black Sea.

There indeed had been revolts of these Adyghe and Kabardinian Circassians before the 1550s and on some occasions they harmed Ottoman subjects and shipping but they hardly damaged Ottoman possessions on much of a scale before the Muscovite-Cossack involvement. As their alliance with the Cossacks of Vyshnevetskyi proved, the Circassian tribes turned out to be too dangerous to be left uncontrolled. Many Circassian chiefs opted to side with Muscovy and Vyshnevetskyi in the second half of 1550s. Despite having received the title of *sancakbey* and salary from the Porte since 1539, even Kansavuk of the Janeyes allied himself with Vyshnevetskyi and Muscovy.³⁰ Another Janey chief, who had been given a *sancak* in Aleppo, was also an ally of Vyshnevetskyi and was eventually killed in 1560 in a

²⁹ Dmytro Ivanovych Vyshnevetskyi was born into the famous family of the Vyshnevetskyis in 1527. He was a magnate in the service of King Sigismund II in southern Volhynia before he started his career as a borderland fighter against the Tatars. He is considered to have built the Khortytsia fortress in the early 1550s, first of a series of Cossack *sich* forts. In these years, he also visited the Porte to negotiate with the Ottomans, which yielded no results. Mykhailo Hrushevsky states that Vyshnevetskyi's plan was to keep the Crimeans in check with Lithuanian-Polish support while maintaining good relations with the Ottoman Porte. In 1556, he chose to serve the Muscovite Tsar Ivan IV, who decided to take the offensive against the Crimean Khanate. In the service of Muscovy, Vyshnevetskyi organized raids against Crimean Tatar and Ottoman possessions in the north of the Black Sea. In these raids, he was helped by the Circassians, who swore allegiance to the Muscovite tsar in the 1550s. In the first years of the 1560s, he left Muscovite service and approached Lithuania again. Then, he intervened in the Moldavian affairs but in one of the battles in 1563 was taken prisoner and sent to Istanbul where he was executed upon the orders of the Ottoman sultan. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, vol. 7, *The Cossack Age to 1625*, trans. Bohdan Struminski, ed. Serhii Ploky and Frank E. Sysyn (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1999), 88-98. Also see Liubomyr Vynar, *Kniaz Dmytro Vyshnevets'kyi* (Munich: Ukrainian Free Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1964).

³⁰ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 76-90; Order to the governor of Kefe (April 1560), MD 3, no. 961.

battle with the Ottomans according to Ottoman documents.³¹ Sibok of the Janey, Atsimgok, and Kanuko of Kabarda were also first among those who joined the Cossack-Muscovite front in the region and fought against the Ottomans.³² The above-mentioned Sibok was in fact one of the sons of Kansavuk.³³ Moreover, in a letter to the Crimean khan, it was said that Circassian chiefs, Polad Sultan and Cantemir, were likely to go to Muscovy and eventually harm the Ottoman lands and Muslim subjects in the Taman region. The khan was asked to protect these areas and assist in the repairs of the fortress of Özi.³⁴ Such information was flowing to the Porte and presumably it must have demonstrated to the Ottomans the value of controlling the Circassian tribes and lands for the security of Ottoman possessions and subjects.

There were four possible reasons that explain why the Circassian chiefs abandoned the Porte and approached Muscovy so readily. First, both the Adyghes and the Kabardinians had been raided many times by the Crimean Tatars in the first half of the sixteenth century and had to pay a heavy annual tribute to the khan.³⁵ Crimean Khan Sahib Girey I was ruthless in his sway over the North Caucasus. He raided the Janey and Kabarda very often and took droves of slaves.³⁶ His harsh policies against the Janey and Kabarda until his

³¹ MD 3, no. 961. The Janey chief had two hundred soldiers who joined Vyshnevetskyi's Cossacks. Together they attacked the fortress of Azak. Ottoman soldiers from Kefe managed to annihilate the Circassians before the Cossacks of Vyshnevetskyi could reach them using the river route.

³² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 3.

³³ E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh sviazi s Rossiei: Vtoraia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1963), 205.

³⁴ Order to the Crimean Khan (November 1559), MD 3, no. 527

³⁵ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 76-90.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-90.

dethronement by Süleyman I in 1551 left the North Caucasus in near ruin. In addition to these raids, it was customary for the Crimean khans to receive slaves as tribute from the Circassian chiefs. Second, although Ottoman direct rule was flexible, it brought about taxation and other intrusive administrative practices which led the Adyghes to revolt or migrate to the mountainous regions. Third, the Muscovite-Cossack alliance offered the Circassians economic benefits in terms of more stipends from the tsar and booty from the raids. Lastly, Muscovite lands were far from the North Caucasus compared to the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman provinces. The Circassian chiefs might have hoped that Muscovite control would be more flexible and laxer. As soon as a new power emerged with a policy of co-optation rather than direct exploitation in the form of Tatar slave raids or Ottoman taxation, the Janey, Besleney, and Kabardinian Circassians were ready to negotiate their allegiance and take advantage of the situation. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the Circassian rulers welcomed Muscovite attempts in the region.

It was the alliance with Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi and the support of the Muscovites that encouraged the Circassian tribes to raid Ottoman possessions. With Circassian help, Vyshnevetskyi managed to capture the fortresses of Taman and Temrük in 1557. The fall of Taman and Temrük to Vyshnevetskyi's Cossacks and Circassian forces and was a cause for true alarm. Vyshnevetskyi continued his raids and even threatened Azak which was very important for the security of Kefe and the Black Sea. The Ottomans were able to recapture Taman and Temrük in the following year. In 1559, the Janey and Kabarda Circassians attacked Azak and Taman but they were defeated by the governor of Kefe. Kansavuk, who

by this time had been working with the Cossacks and Muscovy, was killed and his head was sent to Istanbul.³⁷

Although the Muscovites denied any connection with the activities of Vyshnevetskyi³⁸ the Porte already knew about the Muscovite support for the Cossack-Circassian alliance. Ali Reis, who was sent to Azak for its defense, reported to the Porte in August 1559 that “Muscovy sent one of its own commanders named Anyan with four thousand infidels to help Dimitrash (Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi) and to attack us.”³⁹ Moreover, in a letter sent to the Crimean khan, it was pointed out that Vyshnevetskyi was “loyal to the Muscovite Tsar.”⁴⁰ The Ottomans also received a report that Vyshnevetskyi managed to gather 70,000 musketeers in Astrakhan ready to attack Ottoman possessions, especially Kefe and Azak, in the spring of 1560. Though 70, 000 musketeers figure is certainly an exaggeration, this report is important for showing that Vyshnevetskyi was receiving support from Astrakhan and the level of anxiety that the Cossack-Circassian alliance caused in the Porte.⁴¹ Another letter from the khan to the Porte indicated that a Crimean spy in Muscovite lands returned and, according to him, the Cossacks were preparing to assault Ottoman and

³⁷ MD 3, no. 961.

³⁸ Order to the governor of Kefe (June 1560), MD 3, no. 1266. The Muscovites sent an envoy to the Crimean khan informing him about the forthcoming attacks of Vyshnevetskyi in 1560 by saying, “Dimitrash is on his way to attack the Ottoman lands. You should know that it is not our doing.” The sancakbey of Kefe reported this to the Porte in a letter. Also see the letter sent to the Crimean Khan MD 3, no. 1265 about the raids of the Cossacks and warfare.

³⁹ MD 3, no. 266. Ali Reis and the Ottoman fleet under his command stayed in the Sea of Azov until the Cossack threat was over. In September 1559, the governor of Kefe was ordered to provide them with foodstuffs and protect the ships in case of a Cossack attack. MD 3, no. 278.

⁴⁰ Order to the Crimean Khan (May 1560), MD 3, no. 1048.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Crimean lands.⁴² The Porte, in response, organized its governors in the region against the Cossack-Circassian raids. In May 1560, Istanbul sent a series of letters to the provinces of İskenderiyye (Albanian: Shkodër), Çirmen (Greek: Ormenio), Vidin, Vulçitrin (Albanian: Vushtrri), Selanik (Greek: Thessaloniki), İnebahtı (Greek: Naupactus), Alacahisar (Serbian: Kruševac), and Akkerman (Ukrainian: Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy) ordering the governors in these provinces muster their timariots and volunteers (*dirliksüz*) and send them to Silistre (Bulgarian: Silistra).⁴³ A similar order also went out to the *voivodes* of Wallachia and Moldavia asking them to go to Silistre with their troops.⁴⁴ Then the governor of Silistre, Sinan Pasha, was informed that *sipahis* from the above-mentioned *sancaks*, and Wallachian and Moldavian troops would gather in Silistre under his command. He was ordered to muster these forces to defend Azak and other Ottoman lands in case they were attacked by Vyshnevetskyi and his “cursed” Cossacks.⁴⁵ The Crimean khan and the governor of Kefe were also notified about the situation and were asked to be in touch with Sinan Pasha of Silistre regarding the defenses against the Zaporozhian Cossacks.⁴⁶

While the Ottomans and the Crimeans were defending themselves from the raids of the Cossacks and Circassians, Muscovy concentrated its efforts on dominating one of the most strategic areas of the North Caucasus, namely Kabarda. By 1567, the strongest Muscovite position in the North Caucasus was in Kabarda around the Terek River. In that

⁴² Order to the Crimean Khan (April 1560), MD 3, no. 954.

⁴³ MD 3, no. 1054.

⁴⁴ MD 3, no. 1050.

⁴⁵ MD 3, no. 1047. In May 1560, the governor was also ordered to include Tatars of Silistre in this force and told that an Ottoman fleet was being sent to the region from the Black Sea.

⁴⁶ Orders to the Crimean Khan and governor of Kefe (May 1560), MD 3, nos. 1048, 1049.

year they constructed Sunzhenskii Ostrog (lit., “Sunzha Fort”) on the Terek River and stationed a thousand musketeers in it, as requested by their loyal client, Temriuk of Kabarda.⁴⁷ Given the many Circassian chiefs opting for alignment with Muscovy and the construction of a Muscovite fortress in Kabarda, the Porte realized the need to deal with the situation at hand. The Muscovite presence and activities in Kabarda and especially in the Adyghe lands was seen as an unjustified occupation of Ottoman/Crimean possessions. From the perspective of the Crimean khan and the Porte, the North Caucasus was under the suzerainty of the Crimean Khanate. Moreover, the northwestern part of it was, the actual situation on the ground notwithstanding, considered by the Ottomans as being under their direct control. In his letters to the Muscovite tsar, the Crimean khan’s terms for the Adyghe lands were translated into Russian as *cherkasov turskogo* (Circassians of the Turk) and *turskogo sanchaki* (Turkish *sancaks*).⁴⁸

Considering all these factors, snatching from the Muscovites Astrakhan, whence the latter were engineering their operations in the North Caucasus, was naturally the first order of business for the Porte. From the Ottoman point of view, the capture of Astrakhan and establishment of a strong Ottoman fortress would have suited the Ottoman method of conquest as put forth by Halil İnalcık. If the Ottomans were to take Astrakhan, they would have a good chance of subduing those loosely allied or hostile northern Caucasian peoples for good by encircling them both in the east and in the west. Furthermore, as Khan Devlet Girey justly feared, it would increase the Sublime Porte’s control over the Crimean Khanate.

⁴⁷ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 13; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (henceforth *PSRL*), *Lietopisnii sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarshei ili Nikonovskoi letopis* (St. Petersburg, 1904; Reprint, Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 13:405.

⁴⁸ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (henceforth *RGADA*), *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 47a.

After subduing an area, establishing direct rule was a typical Ottoman strategy. This strategy was important in containing the centrifugal forces within the Ottoman borderland system. First, the Ottomans sought to establish a degree of suzerainty over a neighboring political power. Then, they tried to eliminate that power's native ruling elite and establish direct rule by re-organizing land ownership under the timar system, if possible.⁴⁹ The local landlords and other elites were not totally deprived of their previous rights; on the contrary, they could be included in the timar system and therefore be reconciled with the Ottoman administration, whose aim was the gradual assimilation of these local nobles.⁵⁰ Furthermore, small garrisons were immediately stationed in several fortresses in the conquered area and remaining fortresses were demolished. All this was done to prevent the local elite from becoming centers of resistance against Ottoman rule and to lessen the cost of maintaining fortresses.⁵¹ Moreover, the Ottomans might grant the native population tax exemptions in order to secure their loyalty. They used the same methods in Egypt and in several parts of Anatolia in the sixteenth century. By conquering Astrakhan the Porte might have planned to contain the polities of the North Caucasus and the Crimean Khanate itself.

Another dimension of a successful move into the Astrakhan area would have been to threaten Safavid Iran from the Caspian Sea. This would have given the Ottomans—who by now demonstrated capability to build and use sea power effectively—a huge strategic

⁴⁹ Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103-7; Metin Kunt, "17. yüzyılda Osmanlı kuzey politikası üzerine bir yorum," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi dergisi* 4-5 (1976-77): 111-15; Gábor Ágoston, "A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers," in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Change*, ed. Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 18.

⁵⁰ İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," 103.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

advantage. An Ottoman fleet sailing from Astrakhan in the Caspian Sea could prove be disastrous for the Safavids. When plans were discussed in the Imperial Council in Istanbul, those who supported a campaign in the north emphasized its value for encircling Iran. According to the Ottoman chroniclers, the idea of a campaign to capture Astrakhan came from Kasım Bey, who “was a *mutasarrıf* (provincial administrator) in Kefe for many years.” Despite some viziers’ arguments about the futility of such a campaign, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha agreed with Kasım Bey and convinced the sultan to approve Kasım’s proposal.⁵² Peçevi adds that Mehmed Pasha always thought about ways to conquer Iran and that “some wise people” advised him to dig a canal between the Don and Volga rivers.⁵³

Appeals from the Muslim khanates of Central Asia and local Tatars around Astrakhan and Kazan were also influential in the Ottoman decision to capture Astrakhan. In their letters to the Crimean khan and to the Porte, the proponents of the campaign such as Sokullu Mehmed Pasha stressed the notion of Muslim solidarity and the role of the Ottoman Sultan as the protector of the Sunni Muslims in the world to justify a campaign in the north.⁵⁴ Being the main supporter of this campaign, indeed Mehmed Pasha was convinced of the benefits of Ottoman capture of Astrakhan and Ottoman control of the Caspian Sea.⁵⁵

Astrakhan was also important in securing control of two key military and commercial roads—from west to east Crimea-Astrakhan-Central Asia and from north to south,

⁵² *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet devirleri*, ed. Faris Çerçi (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2000), 2:6-7.

⁵³ İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, ed. Fahri Derin and Vahit Çabuk, (Istanbul: Enderun, 1980), 1:468.

⁵⁴ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:6-8; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:468-69.

⁵⁵ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:6-7.

Astrakhan-Derbend-Tabriz.⁵⁶ Astrakhan was along the trade routes that connected China and Central Asia with Anatolia and the Levant passing through the North Caucasus. Moreover, Astrakhan was a control point for the Caspian Sea as Kefe and Azak were for the Black Azov Seas respectively.

Because of all these reasons, a campaign against Astrakhan became part of the agenda of the Ottoman Empire. In February 1568, an order was sent to Cafer Bey of Kefe. He was asked to consult with the Crimean khan regarding the campaign for Astrakhan and submit a report on the timing of the campaign and necessary preparations for such an undertaking.⁵⁷ In order to realize a campaign in the north, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha arranged for Kefe to be upgraded to the status of a governor-generalship (*beylerbeylik*) and be the center for the preparations.⁵⁸ In 1568, Kasım Pasha, originally a Circassian with a broad knowledge of the region, was appointed as the governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Kefe. He immediately started preparations and sent men to the area where the distance between Don and Volga rivers was the shortest. He submitted his findings to the Porte in a report. Unfortunately, we do not know the details of this report but as we understand from chronicles, it was indicated that a canal between the Don and Volga rivers was feasible and the campaign to capture Astrakhan would be successful with a small army that would be supported by the Crimean Tatar and Nogay cavalry.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Co-optation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the Sixteenth Century," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 22; İnalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 69.

⁵⁷ Order to the governor of Kefe (February 1568), MD 7, no. 838.

⁵⁸ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:7; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:468-69.

⁵⁹ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:6-8; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:468-70.

The Porte then sent a series of orders to the provinces regarding recruitment of men and organization of materials for the campaign.⁶⁰ Ammunition, cannons, guns, and bullets were sent to Azak from Kefe and the castellan of Azak were ordered to ensure their safety until the campaign commenced.⁶¹ Engineers and craftsmen arrived in Kefe for the construction of new ships and Hızır Reis from the Porte was appointed as the captain of the fleet that would sail to Astrakhan via the Don and Volga.⁶² Supplies were crucial because it was a long-range campaign. In 1568, the governors and kadis of Çorum were ordered to prepare foodstuffs for the army bound for Astrakhan.⁶³ A similar order was sent to the kadis of Kefe, Maykop (Russian: Maykop; Adyghe: Myequape), Soğudak (Ukrainian: Sudak), Kerç (Ukrainian: Kerch), and Taman for procurement of approximately more than 141,000 kilograms of *peksimet* (hard-tack).⁶⁴ Foodstuffs that came to Kefe from other provinces were to be swiftly sent to the storages in Azak.⁶⁵ Moreover, orders to gather soldiers from different parts of the empire were also sent out to the provinces. Timariots from the sancaks of Köstendil (Bulgarian: Kyustendil), Silistre, Niğbolu (Bulgarian: Nikopol), Canik, Amasya, and Çorum were asked to gather for the campaign under the command of Kasım Bey of

⁶⁰ Especially see MD 7, nos. 1554, 1738, 2076, 2252, 2745. Some of these documents are summarized by Alexandre Bennigsen and Halil İncalcık. See Alexandre Bennigsen, “L’expédition turque contre Astrakhan en 1569, d’après les Registres des ‘Affaires importantes’ des Archives ottomanes,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 8 (1967), 427-446; İncalcık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry,” 101-106.

⁶¹ Order to the *dizdar* and *azablar agası* of Azak (June 1568), MD 7, no. 1554. They are also ordered to register every material they received in a *defter*.

⁶² Order to the governor-general of Kefe (July 1568), MD 7, no. 1738.

⁶³ MD 7, no. 2076.

⁶⁴ MD 7, no. 2252. Kurat claims that this amount could indeed be provided by the time of the campaign. See Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, 22

⁶⁵ Order to the governor-general of Kefe (November 1568), MD 7, no. 2599; İncalcık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry,” 79.

Kefe.⁶⁶ İncalcık calculates that timariot soldiers from these *sancaks* totaled around 10,000 to 11,000.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the castellan of Kefe was ordered to provide as many men as Kasım Bey demanded from resident soldiers (*hisar erleri*) of the fortress.⁶⁸ We know that Kasım added a thousand of these soldiers to his army.⁶⁹ Therefore, the main Ottoman army that set off for Astrakhan was about 13,000-15,000 strong. Apart from these, many workers from Kefe and Taman regions (*cerahors*) were registered for service along with the army in order to dig the proposed canal between the Don and Volga rivers.⁷⁰

As we understand from these documents, this was a small-scale campaign and the Porte thought that the capture of Astrakhan would be easy. However, compared to their western and eastern frontiers, this area was nonetheless complicated for the Porte. The steppes and mountainous areas of the North Caucasus were hard for regular armies to cross. To illustrate, even Şehzade Beyazıd, son of Süleyman I and a contender to the throne, sought his way to the Circassian lands in 1559 so that it would be difficult for Ottoman forces to reach him.⁷¹ Moreover, alliances with the local rulers were extremely fluid. The Porte was

⁶⁶ Order to the governor-general of Kefe (December 1568), MD 7, no. 2691.

⁶⁷ İncalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 78.

⁶⁸ MD 7, no. 2275

⁶⁹ İncalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 79; Ahmed Refik, "Bahr-i Hazar—Karadeniz kanalı ve Ejderhan seferi," *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni mecmuası* 43 (1917): 8.

⁶⁹ İncalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 79; Ahmed Refik, "Bahr-i Hazar—Karadeniz kanalı," 8

⁷⁰ Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:469; İncalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 78.

⁷¹ Order to the governor-general of Diyarbekr (June 1559) MD 3, no. 32. The *mühimme* entry clearly indicates, "Most probably he [Şehzade Beyazıd] plans to reach the Circassian lands through Georgia." On the other hand, the report of Muscovite envoy to the Porte, Ivan Novosiltsev, in 1570 states, "Beyazıd intended to take refuge in the land of Rus' with the sovereign tsar and grand prince..." RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 96a-97b. The Muscovite document claims that Beyazıd wanted to make his way to Muscovy. However, the Ottoman

keen on having the help of the Crimean khan and local rulers at least in terms of providing information and intelligence about the terrain, route, and possible attacks by the Muscovites or Cossacks.

Documents related to the preparation for the Astrakhan campaign of 1569 also show that the Porte did try to get the most up-to-date information and also understand the historical background of the Khanates of Astrakhan and Kazan. However, letters sent to the Crimean Khan and governor of Kefe indicate that basic knowledge with regards to the fall of Kazan and Astrakhan in Istanbul was still limited. Considering that Süleyman I had been in touch with Nogay *mirzas* İsmail and Yusuf regarding the affairs of Kazan and Astrakhan and even granted Yusuf the status of *emirü'l-umera*, the level of the Porte's knowledge about the history and current situation of the region in the Porte in 1568-69 was surprisingly low. In a letter sent to Crimean Khan Devlet Girey in the spring of 1568, the Porte asked the khan to provide detailed information regarding the fall of Astrakhan and Kazan. The khan is also asked how the preparations for such a campaign should proceed.⁷² We remind that the same questions were also directed at governor of Kefe Cafer Bey⁷³ when Kefe was still a province (*sancak*) and before its status was upgraded to governor-generalship (*beylerbeylik*) in 1568 and Kasım Bey was appointed as its first governor-general.

Nogay *mirzas*, even including several *mirzas* from the Greater Nogay Horde, which was under Muscovite control, some local chiefs in the North Caucasus, and some Tatar

document notes that he would try to reach the Circassian lands. At this point, it can be argued that “the land of Rus” in the Muscovite envoy's report refers to the Circassian lands, which was claimed by the tsar in 1559.

⁷² MD 7, no. 2722.

⁷³ MD 7, no. 838.

mirzas from Astrakhan and Kazan appealed to the Porte for a campaign and promised support.⁷⁴ For this reason, the Ottomans thought that their army would receive a substantial amount of help in terms of men from these rulers in the region. In addition to these, there are a few orders addressed to the Circassian chiefs regarding the Astrakhan campaign sent in October 1568. Accordingly, Janey Chief Ahmed was ordered to gather men with weapons to join the approaching Ottoman army under the command of Kasım Bey.⁷⁵ Orders with the same message were also forwarded to six other Circassian chiefs in the Janey and Besleney region. One of them was Mustafa Bey, who three years later would along with his brothers be given permission by the Porte to re-settle in the Taman Peninsula.⁷⁶

Furthermore, there is an order for the ruler of Terek (*Terek hakimi*) sent in October 1568. He was ordered to join the Ottoman army along with other Circassian chiefs. Under his name, there is a note that reads, “Order sent to him was written with some *ri‘ayet* (lit., esteem, observance).”⁷⁷ This implies that he was the most important of all the other recipients of these orders.⁷⁸ The name *Terek* in this document refers to the Terek River and therefore it is safe to assume that *Terek hakimi* refers to the one of the prominent chiefs of the Lesser Kabarda region, which is located along this river. Since 1557, most of the Kabardinian rulers opted to side with Muscovy. However, due to the fragmented politics and internal rivalries within Kabarda, many other Kabardinian rulers appealed to the Crimean khan and the Porte to check the rising power of Temriuk. We know that these rulers

⁷⁴ MD 7, no. 2723.

⁷⁵ MD 7, no. 2246.

⁷⁶ MD 14, no. 1621.

⁷⁷ MD 7, no. 2246.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

constantly warned the khan that if the tsar managed to build a fortress in Kabarda, not only Terek but also the Tyumen and Shevkal Rivers in Daghestan would be lost.⁷⁹ Although there are no orders in *mühimme* registers apart from the document mentioned in the above paragraph in connection with the Astrakhan campaign specifically addressing the Kabardinian rulers by name, we can say that such orders might have been sent by the Crimean chancellery as these territories were nominally considered to be under the sovereignty of the Crimean Khanate. With an understanding of how the Porte conducted its business with the rulers of the North Caucasus and the Crimean khan in regards to the campaign of Astrakhan, we can now look at what was expected and what came out as a result of this undertaking, which was the first active involvement of the Porte against Muscovy.

First of all, it should be emphasized that the importance of the Astrakhan campaign is exaggerated in Russian and in Western academic literature, which is mostly based on Russian studies or sources. The campaign is portrayed as a grand imperial campaign similar to the grand Ottoman campaigns in Europe.⁸⁰ In fact, it was not a full-scale imperial campaign because the Ottomans thought that the enemy was not particularly strong and assumed that a small Ottoman army supported by the Crimean khan, local Circassian chiefs, and Nogay *mirzas* would be adequate to capture Astrakhan. Accordingly, compared to their major operations on the western and eastern fronts where they operated with an army of at least 150,000 strong led by a grand vizier or the sultan himself, for this campaign the Ottomans prepared a rather small army of 13,000-15,000 strong under the command of only a

⁷⁹ S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1960), 3:604.

⁸⁰ See for example, Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Routledge, 2008) and Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Russian Penetration of the Caucasus," in *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, ed. Taras Hunczak (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 239-63.

governor-general. The Ottoman primary sources indicate that the Porte completed the preparations for this campaign in a very short time and that the expended effort was quite limited. Considering that the main threats for the empire were the Habsburgs in the west and the Safavids in the east, Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy were regarded as second-rate, tribute paying vassals, be it directly to the Porte or to the Porte's vassal, the Crimean Khanate.

After necessary orders were sent to the local Ottoman governors, the Crimean khan, and local rulers of the North Caucasus, an Ottoman fleet carrying three thousand janissaries arrived in Azak in April 1569. In May 1569, another Ottoman fleet carrying *sipahis*, janissaries, and workers left for Azak. In spite of the order from the Porte saying that the Crimean khan was to send his army commanded by his *kethüda* (representative) and that the khan himself should stay in the Crimea to protect the peninsula, Devlet Girey decided to join the Ottoman army himself with 30,000 to 50,000 Crimean soldiers.⁸¹ The fact that the khan was ordered to stay in the Crimea supports the argument that the Porte was always suspicious of the Crimean khan's intentions and tried to contain him. Moreover, the status of the khan in the Ottoman protocol was much higher than an Ottoman governor-general. Because of this reason, perhaps it was considered that participation of the Crimean khan in the campaign was likely to bring about hierarchy problems within the Ottoman-Crimean army.

2.2. The Campaign and its Aftermath: Kabarda Subjugated

Eventually, in the summer an Ottoman army of 13,000-15,000 and the Crimean Tatar cavalry of 30,000-50,000 set out to capture Astrakhan. Kasım Pasha first tried to dig the proposed canal between the Don and Volga rivers (the distance between the two rivers at their closest

⁸¹ Order to the Crimean Khan (October 1568), MD 7, no. 2757.

point is 101 kilometers). However, after working on it for a while he decided that this was an impossible undertaking and decided to take the army by the land to besiege Astrakhan.⁸² As we understand from Ottoman chronicles, there were no Muscovite attempts to attack the Ottoman-Crimean army as the Muscovite forces were engaged in their western frontiers against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and in any event they intentionally avoided a direct confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman-Crimean army reached Astrakhan in September 1569, which was very late in terms of the campaign season.⁸³ There were skirmishes between the Muscovite and Ottoman forces but a full-siege of Astrakhan was not realized at all due to the lack of heavy weapons and unrest in the Ottoman army thanks to rumors circulating in the Ottoman camp that the Muscovite tsar sent an army of relief and that the Safavids would also send support from the south. Considering all these factors, retreat was seemingly the sole option for Kasım Pasha. He began preparations to retreat on September 26, 1569.⁸⁴ However, the Porte dispatched an order with Ahmed Çavuş who arrived in the Ottoman camp while the Ottoman army had been on its way back to Kefe. Kasım Pasha was asked to build a fortress in the place of the old Astrakhan fortress and winter there with his army until next spring so that they could capture Astrakhan with more

⁸² *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:7-9; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:469-70. İnalcık agrees with the Ottoman chronicles and says that one-third of the canal was completed in three months. İnalcık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 79-80. However, Kurat believes that the main objective of the campaign was to capture Astrakhan. He claims that it took the Ottoman only two weeks to understand that digging a canal between the Don and Volga was not possible. Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, 18. Also see his "The Turkish Expedition to Astrakhan in 1569 and the Problem of the Don- Volga Canal," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 40 (1961), 17.

⁸³ Report of Kasım Pasha to the Porte on the Astrakhan Campaign (no date, 1569) published in French by Tayyib Gökbilgin, "L'expédition ottomane contre Astrakhan en 1569," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 11 (1970): 118-23. For a facsimile of the original document see Alexandre Bennigsen et al., *Le Khanat de Crimée dans les Archives de Musée du Palais de Topkapı* (Paris: Mouton, 1978), 135-38.

⁸⁴ Report of Simon Maltsev (1569) in P. A. Sadikov, "Pokhod Tatar i Turok na Astrakhan' v 1569," *Istoriceskie zapiski* 22 (1947): 153-64 and Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, appendices, 6-7.

soldiers and weapons that would be sent.⁸⁵ However, Kasım Pasha was unable to obey the orders from the Porte as the army was already retreating.

Many Ottoman chroniclers and modern scholars agree that Devlet Girey sabotaged the campaign by spreading rumors that negatively affected the morale of the army.⁸⁶ There were rumors about the winters being extremely cold and a Muscovite relief force en route to Astrakhan.⁸⁷ As for the support from local Circassian chiefs, as we understand from chronicles and other primary sources, such help in terms of men or weapons never came from these rulers, even from the Adyghe Circassians (the Janey and Beshtav Circassians) who were under tighter control of the Ottoman Empire. However, the Daghestani *shamkhal* approached the Porte in 1569 by sending a letter and envoy to Kasım Pasha. In his letter he swore allegiance to the sultan and promised, “[the *shamkhal*] will be a friend to friends of the sultan and enemy to enemies of the sultan.”⁸⁸ Submission of the *shamkhal* was important because the Daghestani *shamkhals* would be significant elements in the new Ottoman policy that would be initiated in the North Caucasus in the 1570s.

The retreat of the Ottoman army was accompanied by many losses. Upon the advice of Devlet Girey, the Ottoman army decided to make the return trip via a different route—

⁸⁵ Report of Kasım Pasha to the Porte on the Astrakhan Campaign (no date, 1569), Bennigsen et al., *Le Khanat Crimée*, 136-37. A Polish envoy, Andrzej Taranowski, also came with the *çavuş*, and witnessed the situation around Astrakhan and within the Ottoman camp. “Istoriia o prikhode turetskogo i tatarskogo voinstva pod Astrakhan v leto ot Rozhdetsva Khristova 1677,” trans. N. N. Murzakevich, *Zapiski Odesskogo Obshchestva Arheologii i Istorii Drevnostei* 8 (1872): 479-88; N. A. Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv.*, Uchenye zapiski, vyp. 94 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Gosudarsvennogo Universiteta, 1946), 93.

⁸⁶ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Kühü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:8-10; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 1:469-71. Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, 96-97; İnalcık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry,” 82-86; Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 55; Bennigsen, “L'expédition turque contre Astrakhan,” 440.

⁸⁷ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Kühü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:8-10.

⁸⁸ Report of Kasım Pasha to the Porte on the Astrakhan Campaign (no date, 1569), Bennigsen et al., *Le Khanat Crimée*, 136-37. (...dostlarına dost düşmanlarına düşman olduğun ' ilam itmiş...)

across the North Caucasus passing through Kabarda and Beshtav to Taman and Kefe. Due to the harsh conditions of the North Caucasus steppe, many soldiers of the retreating Ottoman army lost their lives or belongings. On top of this, the Circassian tribes of the Kabarda region did not hesitate to target the Ottoman soldiers whenever there was a chance.⁸⁹ The failure of the campaign possibly encouraged the Kabardinian chiefs to raid the returning Ottoman forces. In contrast on the way to Astrakhan the Ottoman army did not have to face any sort of attack.

It was an utter failure for the Ottomans. Following the campaign, the power of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha greatly weakened and his opponents convinced the sultan to direct Ottoman war efforts towards the conquest of Cyprus rather than engaging in any more wars on the northern frontiers. Personal power struggles at the Imperial Council were apparently quite instrumental in bringing fluctuations to the Ottoman northern policy. Although Sokullu lost his prominent status and the Porte began warfare against Venice for Cyprus, he and some other Ottoman officials did not abandon northern affairs and forget about the possibility of Muscovite expansion into the Caucasus. In the years following the failure of the Astrakhan Campaign, the increasing number of orders in the *mühimme* registers concerning the Circassian and Daghestani rulers implies that the Ottomans became more and more active in the North Caucasus in spite of the fact that they preferred to direct their war efforts towards Cyprus. The most notable change was that the Porte began to increase its interaction with the rulers of the region by directly corresponding with them rather than through the Crimean khan. Yet, they also realized that the Crimean khan was still indispensable for the control of

⁸⁹ Order to Şirin Ali Bey of the Crimea (October 1586), MD 62, no. 226; Ahmed Feridun Bey, *Münşa'atü's-selatin*, (Istanbul, 1275/1858-1859), 552-53; Report of Simon Maltsev (1569) in P. A. Sadikov, "Pokhod Tatar i Turok," 153-64 and Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, appendices, 6-7.

this region particularly as it was an unswerving foe of Muscovy. That is why, although the Ottomans clearly blamed Khan Devlet Girey for the failure of the campaign, they did not dare to remove him as it could likely create more problems on the northern frontier and in the Caucasus than it would solve. Their military power in the north, specifically in Kefe, was decimated and the governor-general of Kefe was in a bad situation due to the failure of the Astrakhan Campaign. Had the Porte removed Devlet Girey and had there been a resistance in the Crimea, the Porte would not have had enough troops and materiel to fight a rebellious khan.

The Porte did not, however, forget to order the punishment of those who sided with Muscovy in the North Caucasus and harmed its forces on their return route from Astrakhan. Devlet Girey entered Kabarda in 1570 under the guidance of Temriuk's nephew, Kordanuk (Gazi Mirza), and defeated Temriuk who was injured in one of the battles and died shortly after this incident.⁹⁰ His brother Kanbulat replaced him and for the time being allied himself with the Crimean khan.⁹¹ In 1577, he would approach to the Muscovite tsar again following a Nogay attack on Kabarda even though the attack was repelled by the Kabardinians. In addition to these, the sultan encouraged the khan to raid Muscovite territories and praised him every time he did so.⁹²

On the other hand, with a delicate situation on its western frontier in its struggle against the Poland-Lithuania, Muscovy was unable to risk a war with the Ottomans over Astrakhan. In general it was not willing to abandon its longstanding policy of avoidance of

⁹⁰ RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 284a-285b.

⁹¹ Aytok Namitok, "The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia," *Caucasian Review* 2 (1956): 17-28.

⁹² E.g., Order to the Crimean Khan (November 1571), MD 16, no. 26.

direct conflict with the Ottomans. And so, in 1570 Ivan IV sent his envoys to the Porte to reestablish friendship. His envoy, Novosiltsev, delivered Ivan IV's letter in which the tsar assured the Ottomans of Muscovy's good treatment of Muslims in his realm and his desire to be in peace with the sultan.⁹³ Due to the failure of the expedition in 1569, the loss in a fire of the munitions stockpiled in Azak for a possible campaign in the future to capture Astrakhan,⁹⁴ and also their engagement in Cyprus, the Ottomans at this point knew that a second campaign in the near future was unattainable. Therefore, Selim II wrote to Ivan IV that there could be peace between the two states if Muscovy fulfilled certain conditions—opening of and security on the route through Astrakhan for pilgrims from Central Asia, demolition of the fortress in Kabarda, which, according to the Porte, belonged to the Ottoman Empire since the conquest of Kefe by Mehmed II,” and return of the envoy of the Crimean khan who had been detained in Moscow for four years.⁹⁵ The Ottomans did not even ask for the return of Astrakhan or Kazan as long as the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda was demolished. This clearly indicates the priorities of the Ottomans in their struggle in the north. For the Porte, withdrawal of the Muscovites from Kabarda and the North Caucasus in general, which was considered as being under the sovereignty of the sultan, was more important than saving or annexing the ex-Muslim Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan.

After that the Muscovite tsar accepted all of the sultan's conditions and sent his envoy Kuzminskii to Istanbul. However, this time the Porte felt more confident and asked for

⁹³ Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570. This document was first published in Feridun Bey, *Münşa'atü's-selatin*, 460-61. Also Halil İnalçık, “Osmanlı-Rus rekabetinin menşei,” 400-1 (See Appendix I-A). The Muscovite copy of this letter is in RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 56b-59a (see Appendix II-A).

⁹⁴ Order to the governor of Azak (February 1570), MD 8, no. 10.

⁹⁵ Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570. İnalçık, “Osmanlı-Rus rekabetinin menşei,” 400-1.

more—now, it demanded Astrakhan for the Ottoman Empire and Kazan for the Crimean Khanate and also submission of the tsar to the Porte as the conditions of peace.⁹⁶ Furthermore, Khan Devlet Girey managed to raid Muscovite territories extensively in 1571, including the outskirts of Moscow, forced the tsar to flee his capital. After this dramatic event, Devlet Giray became known as “*Taht Algan*” (lit., “the taker of the capital”).⁹⁷ This Tatar raid was indeed successful, but perhaps its success was exaggerated by the Crimean Tatars on purpose so that it would be an indication that Muscovy was not an imminent threat and the khanate was still able to contain it and even take its capital. And that another Ottoman campaign in the north against the Muscovites would not be necessary.

The Campaign of Astrakhan in 1569 was for the Ottomans the first experience of active involvement in the north against Muscovy. However, the campaign was a complete military fiasco. Although by the time they started the campaign the Ottomans had acquired an adequate knowledge of the region and its intricacies, they failed to realize that their aim of digging a canal between Don and Volga was far from attainable and that the local rulers in the North Caucasus could not be controlled easily. In events that followed, it became clear to the Ottomans that for any military undertaking in the north, the local rulers of the North Caucasus were to be directly contacted and encouraged to draw closer the Porte. They also realized that it was necessary to be mindful that the Crimean khan had his own prerogatives in the region. Most importantly, for the Ottomans the Astrakhan Campaign was instrumental in changing their understanding of and policy in the north.

⁹⁶ Imperial letter to the Muscovite King, MD 16, no. 3.

⁹⁷ MD 16, no. 26. İnalçık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry,” 90.

2.3. Killing Two Birds with One Stone: The Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590

The Ottomans would find an opportunity to apply an active and indeed more adequate northern policy during the war against Safavid Iran that started in 1578. This important event made it clear for the Ottomans that the North Caucasus was a strategic zone and passageway and that it ought to be a protected part of the empire rather than regarded as a fluid borderland. This time both because the enemy was stronger than Muscovy and the Porte learned so much from its previous failures in the region, preparations in terms of the size of the army, supply lines, and relations with the local rulers were handled in a much better way. The *mühimme* registers and chronicles contain a good amount of information related to the Ottoman-Safavid War and situation in the North Caucasus during the war.

In contrast to their traditional approach to North Caucasus affairs involving the Crimean khan as an intermediary, during the preparations and the war of 1578-1590 and its aftermath, the Ottomans communicated with the local rulers directly. This may explain the abundance of records of correspondence with local rulers of the North Caucasus in the Ottoman archives compared with the records related to the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569. Many historians think that the reason the Ottomans used the North Caucasus route and actively involved themselves in this region was the distance of the targeted Safavid territories in the Caucasus from the Ottoman centers in eastern Anatolia, i.e., Van, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, etc. They argue that could be difficult for the Ottomans to control and hold the Caucasus territories from their eastern Anatolian strongholds.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ See İnalçık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 93; Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran siyasi münasebetleri* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, 1962).

However, evidence suggests that the main reason behind the Porte's preference for using the North Caucasus route was related to the Muscovite presence in the region. The Porte knew that during the Astrakhan campaign, the Muscovite tsar tried to establish an alliance with the Safavids and sent some heavy weapons and other materials to them.⁹⁹ That is why the Ottomans had to send an army to the Safavid border as well in 1569 to neutralize any possible threat from them.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, a similar alliance between the Safavids and Muscovites was naturally expected again by the Porte. We know that the Porte suspected and then learned for sure that the Muscovites were helping the Safavids through Astrakhan and exchanging envoys to negotiate an alliance against the Ottoman Empire during the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590. In a letter to the Crimean khan sent in 1579, the Porte informed the khan that the Muscovites were sending weapons to the Safavids.¹⁰¹ Moreover, they were aware that Muscovite envoys had visited the Safavid court during the war. After all, Ottoman domination over the Caucasus would be disastrous for the Muscovites as the next step for the Ottomans would be to capture Astrakhan and conquer the lower Volga. In none of the prior Ottoman campaigns against the Safavids had the Ottoman army used this route through the North Caucasus. They always attacked Safavid territories from eastern Anatolian centers in spite of the fact that the North Caucasus was under the sovereignty of the Porte "since the conquest of Kefe," as the Ottomans argued.

⁹⁹ MD 32, no. 672; P. P. Bushev, *Istoriia posolstv i diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii Russkogo i Iranskogo gosudarstv v 1586-1612 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 44; Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests," *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 108. According to the Muscovite records, the tsar sent 500 arquebuses and 4,000 muskets.

¹⁰⁰ İnalçık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 80-81; Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, 222.

¹⁰¹ MD 32, no. 672.

However, now the Ottomans must have felt they could no longer afford to allow Muscovite presence in Kabarda, nor even ignore its ownership of Astrakhan. Here we have a new circumstance as, for example, during Süleyman I's campaigns against the Safavids in 1532-1534, 1548-1549, and 1553-1555, the Ottoman army neither used the North Caucasus route nor felt any danger that another political entity in this region could helping the Safavids by sending weapons or other materials. Therefore, due to the presence of Muscovy and their possible involvement on the side of the Safavids, the Porte must have felt compelled to secure and control the North Caucasus. Moreover, the architect of the 1569 Astrakhan Campaign, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, was still the grand vizier at the Porte. We know that although the immediate objective of the 1578-1590 war from the Ottoman perspective was to "save" Shirvan and other Sunni parts of Safavid Iran, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha also planned to build an Ottoman fleet that would sail in the Caspian Sea with its base located in Derbend and "conquer the surrounding lands."¹⁰² Indeed, these lands included Astrakhan. The Ottomans wanted to kill two birds with one stone. In a letter sent from Istanbul in June 1579 as soon as the Ottoman army secured its position in Derbend, Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha was asked whether *pelit* (valonia oak) trees and iron ores (for nails) that were needed to build ships for a fleet could be found in the Caucasus or not.¹⁰³ All this is why the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590 was directly related to the North Caucasus and its peoples and Ottoman northern policy.

As already pointed out, after 1569 the Porte began to depart from its relatively lax policy in the north. A more active policy there yielded results as early as 1570 when the

¹⁰² MD 38, no. 380; Safvet, "Hazar denizinde Osmanlı sancağı," *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni mecmuası* 3 (1912): 860-61.

¹⁰³ MD 38, no. 380; Safvet, "Hazar denizinde Osmanlı sancağı," 860-61.

Crimean Tatars defeated the pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs. Moreover, Ottoman control over the Adyghe and some other smaller tribes increased following the disappearance, for the time being, of the Muscovites from Kabarda. Even the Crimean khan had to write to the Porte for the rescue of some Nogays who were captured by the Janey. The khan requested the Porte to send an order to those Adyghe Circassians who did not obey the orders sent directly by the khan.¹⁰⁴ This was something new in terms of the patterns of relationships in the region. In many examples, it was the Porte that ordered the Crimean khan to send orders to the local rulers in the North Caucasus both due to the position of the khan as a sovereign of the region and his capability of punishing them. However, apparently right after the Astrakhan campaign of 1659, a new Ottoman policy affected the balance in the region. In another instance, one of the Janey chiefs, Mustafa, was known to have visited the Porte in June 1571 to ask for permission to re-settle in the Taman region. In an order sent to kadis of Kefe and Taman, they were ordered to allow Mustafa and his brothers to settle wherever they wanted.¹⁰⁵ This is significant because the same order was not also sent to the Crimean khan—the affairs of the Janey were now handled in Istanbul through the Ottoman agents in the region rather than the khan.

However, this does not mean that the Crimean khan was no longer of any use for the Ottomans in this region. The Ottomans still continued to apply their “carrot and stick” policy and whenever they needed to use military force against Circassians they still preferred to ask the Crimean khan to punish them. To illustrate, when a certain Circassian chief, Bozokoğlu

¹⁰⁴ Order to the sancakbey of Kefe (1570), MD 9, no. 149. The Porte then inquired with the governor of Kefe and asked if those Circassians were actually submitted to the Porte or not before an order was written. We remind that the governors of Kefe and Azak were the Porte’s main agents in the region for Circassian affairs.

¹⁰⁵ Order to the kadis of Kefe and Taman, MD 14, no. 1621.

Mehmed, and some other chiefs oppressed and harassed Ottoman subjects in the Taman region, in April 1574 the governor-general of Kefe was ordered to consult with the Crimean khan and take appropriate action to capture and punish the rebellious Circassian chiefs.¹⁰⁶ Here, it is obvious that when they had to punish the Circassian chiefs, the Porte and its agents in the region needed the khan as it was impossible or too costly for the regular Ottoman troops in Kefe or Azak. Moreover, the khan was happy to oblige and capture some slaves in the process.

The same active Ottoman strategy can be observed in the Kabarda region as well. Following the Crimean khan's triumphant campaign against pro-Muscovite Temriuk and his allies in Kabarda in 1570, the prestige and power of Muscovy was obviously undermined. The Porte used this opportunity well and tried to intensify its direct relations with Kabarda to a level similar to its relations with the Janeyts of the northwest Caucasus. For this reason, a Kabardinian chief was received in Istanbul and possibly converted to Islam as he bore a Muslim name, Mehmed. In an order sent on May 9, 1573, the governor of Akkerman was informed, "the *sancakbey* of Kabarda (*Kabartay*), Mehmed, set off from the Porte to his *sancak* (province) through Akkerman and Kefe." He was ordered to ensure Mehmed Bey's safety until he reached Kefe.¹⁰⁷ The status of Kabarda as an Ottoman *sancak* was mentioned in the later years as well. The Porte used *elkab* (titles) of *sancakbey* in its correspondence with Mehmed Bey and referred all of the Kabarda as "Kabartay Sancağı."¹⁰⁸ Another important Kabardinian chief, Aslanbek (Arslan Bey in Ottoman documents), also submitted

¹⁰⁶ MD 24, no. 421.

¹⁰⁷ MD 23, no. 130.

¹⁰⁸ MD 42, no. 382.

to the Porte. He was given a salary from Kefe.¹⁰⁹ As we are going to see below, his name is mentioned several times in the chronicles and in the *mühimme* registers as he served the Ottoman army in his region very efficiently.

Apart from the Circassian tribes and polities of the North Caucasus, the Ottomans approached the Daghestani rulers because their cooperation and support for the Ottoman war effort were indispensable. Before the Ottoman attempts to secure submission of Daghestani rulers to the Porte, loyalty of these rulers was contested between the Crimean khan and the Safavid shah. It is known that following the Muscovite occupation of Astrakhan, the *shamkhal* had an uneasy relation with Muscovy. There were attempts for a rapprochement between Muscovy and the *shamkhal* in 1555-1557 but they did not produce any results. Eventually the Porte seemed to be a better choice for Daghestani rulers, possibly because it was far away from Daghestan when compared to the Muscovite position in Astrakhan. Therefore, the *shamkhal* and other rulers in Daghestan might have thought that as Ottoman vassals they could protect their broad autonomy. Moreover, the Circassians appealed the Muscovite tsar and requested the tsar's protection against the Ottoman sultan, the Crimean khan, and the Daghestani *shamkhal*. It was only natural that these three powers would be united against the Circassians and Muscovite tsar who took the Circassians under "his tsar's hand." In this regard, the *shamkhal* sent a letter through the Crimean khan to the Porte in 1574 offering submission as a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁰ In a letter to the *shamkhal* regarding this issue, it was indicated that his father had also submitted to the Porte.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ MD 25, no. 2052.

¹¹⁰ MD 24, no. 510.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Although there is no such document in the Ottoman archives, it is quite possible that a similar submission had taken place before hand, but apparently the Porte at that time had not taken it seriously and left this affair in the hands of the Crimean khan.¹¹²

Another important tribal element that the Ottomans wanted to draw to their side was the Nogays. Their influence along the Volga River and in the North Caucasus was understood well when Muscovy managed to manipulate them effectively. Thus the Nogays were instrumental in the Muscovite annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan. Süleyman I's attempts to win over the Nogay hordes have already been mentioned above. The Lesser Nogay horde under Kazy Mirza had already been in the Kuban region under the Crimean Khanate since 1557. This horde was active around Azak. Although sometimes they created problems in and around Azak, harassing Ottoman subjects or illegally extracting money from merchants and pilgrims, the Porte and the Crimean khan managed to keep them under control and eventually use them for the defense of Ottoman possessions against Cossack or Circassian raids.¹¹³ The Nogays were also good mounted warriors and very effective in the steppes and in the lands of the North Caucasus. For this reason, when some Circassian tribes fled from the Taman region because of taxation, the governor-general of Kefe and governor of Azak were asked to use the Nogays in the region to stop and return the fleeing Circassians.¹¹⁴ In 1575, the governor of Azak, who was the Porte's main agent for Nogay affairs, advised Istanbul that "there are several *palankas* (redoubts) along the Don River. If

¹¹² See note 87 above. It is known that the *shamkhal* had already submitted to the Porte in 1569 during the Astrakhan campaign. We also know that Shamkhal Çoban died in 1578 and was replaced by his son, Emir. Therefore, the *shamkhal* in Daghestan in 1569 and 1574 was the same person. *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 3:266, 306, 311-13.

¹¹³ E.g., order to the sancakbey of Azak MD 24, no. 421; MD 28, nos. 142, 579.

¹¹⁴ MD 14-2, nos. 1543, 1544.

they are repaired and occupied by the Nogays, this will prevent the Cossacks from descending along the river.” He also reported that Azak was no longer depended on Kefe for grain because the Nogays engaged in agriculture in collaboration with the local Ottoman subjects.¹¹⁵ In response, the Porte ordered him to proceed with these plans and always be on good terms with the Nogay mirzas.¹¹⁶

In 1574, the desire of Urus Mirza of the Greater Nogay Horde to submit to the Porte was known in Istanbul. The same Urus Mirza was a son of İsmail Mirza who exchanged letters with Süleyman I but eventually became the most fervent supporter of the Muscovite interests in the Volga region. Like his father, Urus Mirza had been a client of Muscovy and received annual payments from the tsar for his obedience. The reason he approached the Porte in 1574 was that he was not satisfied with the Muscovite payments to and policy on the Greater Nogays. The Porte immediately referred this issue to the governor of Azak. The governor was ordered to consult with the Crimean khan regarding Urus Mirza’s submission and act accordingly.¹¹⁷ Another point to note here is the indispensability of the Crimean khan in the affairs related to the steppe peoples/powers such as the Nogays. The Crimean Khanate’s role and function in the steppes of the Black Sea could not be completely displaced by the direct agents of the Porte itself.

Meanwhile, the Ottomans were also following Muscovite activities in the North Caucasus, especially in Kabarda. They knew that the Muscovites were strengthening and repairing some of their fortresses along the Terek River, i.e., in Kabarda, already in

¹¹⁵ MD 28, no. 579.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ MD 26, no. 241.

December 1575.¹¹⁸ In addition to their keen interest in the Muscovite activities engineered in Astrakhan, the Ottomans tried to establish some sort of defense line against the Cossacks along the Don River and other possible threats from the north just as the Muscovites had been establishing defenses in their southern frontier against the Tatar raids. The only difference was that most of the time the Ottoman plans and projects remained only on paper.

In the 1560s and 1570s, the Cossack threat along the Don River was rising. Both in order to protect Azak and other Ottoman possessions and better control the Nogays and other tribal elements to the north of Azak, the Porte intensified its efforts to establish fortifications. There were some proposals to build fortresses along the Don River, which was considered to be under the sovereignty of the Crimean khan. Most of the time, such plans were proposed to the Crimea and produced no result because the Crimean khan did not find such fortresses necessary or even desirable. There are orders sent at different times in 1576-1577 about construction of fortresses along the Don River and addressed to the governor of Azak and the Crimean khan.¹¹⁹ As mentioned above, the governor of Azak proposed to the Porte that if several *palankas* were to be built in the areas close to the Don River, the Nogays could camp in these *palankas* and stay along the Don both in the winter and summer seasons. This would supposedly force the Cossacks to leave the Don River as they would not be able to attack Azak.¹²⁰ In a letter to the Crimean khan sent in 1576, the Porte ordered him to oversee the repairs of the fortress of Azak and the construction of *palankas* as proposed by the governor

¹¹⁸ Order to the sancakbey of Azak, MD 28, no. 573. Ottoman text is as follows: (...*Rusun Ejderhan semtinden Bahr-i Kulzume andan Terek nam büyük su üzerine kal'a ta'mirine mübaşeret iyledigin 'ilam idüb...*)

¹¹⁹ MD 28, nos. 142, 573, 963; Order to the Crimean Khan, MD 29, no. 332

¹²⁰ MD 28, nos. 142, 573.

of Azak.¹²¹ In 1577, only a year before the Ottoman-Safavid war started, the Crimean khan was informed that a fortress would be built on the Don River in “an area that was under the khan’s jurisdiction.” He was ordered to send men to the area and prepare a report about the feasibility of constructing a fortress and necessary preparations. He was also asked what kind of material such as stone or timber would be better for a fortress in this location.¹²² Such was the situation in general in and around the North Caucasus before the Ottoman-Safavid war broke out.¹²³

2.4. The Porte is in Charge: The Safavid War and the North Caucasus

The Ottoman-Safavid war started in 1578 and accordingly the Porte’s attempts at securing the North Caucasus and winning over local rulers as clients intensified greatly. In February 1578, as soon as the Imperial Council (*Divan-ı Hümayun*) decided to carry out a campaign against the Safavids, the commander (*serdar*) of the Ottoman army, Lala Mustafa Pasha, sent letters from Istanbul to the local rulers in the northern and southern Caucasus. Among those who were asked to join the Ottoman army and serve the sultan in the forthcoming campaign against the Safavids were Daghestani *Shamkhal* Emir Mirza, Gazi Salih of Tabarasan, and Tuchalav Mirza of the Avars.¹²⁴ It was only natural for the *shamkhal* of Daghestan to side with the Ottomans for the time being as he had already been helping the Sunni rulers of

¹²¹ Order to the Crimean Khan, MD 28, no. 963.

¹²² MD 29, no. 332.

¹²³ For a comprehensive narrative of 1578-1590 Ottoman-Safavid War, see F. Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlılar’ın Kafkas ellerini fethi* (1451-1590) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993); and Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İran siyasi münasebetleri*.

¹²⁴ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, MS, Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye Library, 4350, 21b-24b.

Shirvan with his army and eventually defeated by the Safavids.¹²⁵ The Daghestani part of the North Caucasus become centre of the Ottoman activities as Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, the first governor-general of Shirvan and the renowned commander of the Ottoman army, concentrated his forces in Derbend and became actively involved in Daghestani affairs as will be seen below.

Right after the letters from Lala Mustafa Pasha, the Porte also sent a series of letters of invitation and *hil'ats* to the rulers in Daghestan in May 1578. As we understand from these letters, the most prominent and strongest ruler in Daghestan was the *shamkhal*. The Ottoman phrase, *cenab-ı emaret meab*, used by the Porte for important and relatively independent rulers was included in the letters sent to the *shamkhal* between the years 1578 and 1605. In the letters sent to the Daghestani rulers, it is said that the Ottoman army under the command of Lala Mustafa Pasha and the Crimean Tatar army, which included Ottoman musketeers from Azak under the command of Adil Girey, a brother of the Crimean khan, were sent to the Caucasus. The Daghestanis were ordered to help these armies and muster their own soldiers with weapons for the campaign against the Safavids. It was also stated that they could either join the forces of Adil Girey that would go through the North Caucasus route or reach the main Ottoman army. They were advised to consult with Lala Mustafa Pasha and Adil Girey regarding their movement and participation in the campaign. The same order was also sent to the Nusal of the Avars (*Avar hakimi Nusal*), Usmi of the Kaytaks (*Kaytak hakimi Usmi*), Tüki of Tuman (Tümen, *Tuman hakimi Tüki*), Timas of Burgun (Balkar, *Burgun hakimi*

¹²⁵ MD 6, no. 1186. A letter was sent by the Porte in May 1565 to Kasım Mirza of Shirvan who requested Ottoman help against the Safavids' oppressive rule. It was said to him that there was peace between the Ottomans and Safavids. Kasım Mirza was advised to seek help from the *shamkhal*, who was his relative.

Timas), Masum of Tabarasan (*Tabarasan hakimi Masum*), and Gazi Bey of Tabarasan (*Tabarasan hakimi Gazi*).¹²⁶

It so happened that these letters proved to be effective and the Daghestani rulers decided to offer their allegiance to the Porte. In July 1578, when the Ottoman army and Mustafa Pasha camped in Çermik (in Sivas) for a rest, Hüseyin, the envoy of the *shamkhal*, arrived in the camp with *shamkhal*'s letter of submission addressed to the Ottoman sultan. The *shamkhal* praised the sultan and stated that when the day came he would be ready with his 30,000 men to fight against the Safavids.¹²⁷ Thus the Ottomans in this way secured the alliance and support of the *shamkhal*, the strongest ruler in Daghestan. Until these times, the *shamkhal*'s submission was not even contemplated, but after 1578, the Porte, which considered Daghestan to be nominally under the sovereignty of the Crimean Khanate, wanted to cement this nominal tie and turn the Shamkhalate into a proper Ottoman vassal in the region. For this reason, the Ottoman historian Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, who was with Lala Mustafa Pasha during his campaigns, counts the lands of *shamkhal* among the conquests of the latter.¹²⁸

However, the *shamkhal* did not shy away from exchanging letters with Muscovy and its agents in Astrakhan, in which the loyalty of the *shamkhal* and a possible alliance with Muscovy were discussed. As it was the case with other local rulers in the North Caucasus, the *shamkhal* wanted to keep his options open before finally and completely siding with one side or the other. It was indeed beneficial for Shafi Daghestanis to have the Ottomans as their

¹²⁶ MD 32, no. 312.

¹²⁷ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, 46a-48a. His offer of 30,000 men was never realized.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110b.

protectors rather than the Shiite Safavids or the Orthodox Muscovites from the point of view of religious orientation, as was stressed in the letters exchanged between the *shamkhal* and the Ottomans. Yet, it was more of a pragmatic move on the part of the Daghestani rulers. The *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers were already in conflict with the Safavids, Kabardinians, Georgian kingdoms, and sometimes with the Muscovites in Astrakhan. However, because they did not have a common border and conflicting interests, offering their allegiance to the Porte seemed more promising and less problematic.

Another imperial letter from the sultan with similar orders was dispatched to “the *shamkhal* of Tarku” in November 1578. The same letter was also sent out to all of the rulers in Daghestan. The content of the letter was almost the same as the above-mentioned one.¹²⁹ Obviously, the Ottomans expected the participation of the Daghestani rulers in their war effort and did their best to secure it. The Porte warned the Daghestani rulers that they should act according to what was asked of them.

Orders from the Porte about the beginning of the anti-Safavid campaign were sent to the Adyghe and Kabardinian Circassians as well. As previously seen, the Ottomans had already been tightening their grip on the Circassian polities in the northwest Caucasus. It is clear that by 1578 the Circassian chiefs were under stronger control of the Porte and its agents in the region. Serdar Lala Mustafa Pasha’s letter to the king of Tiflis (Tbilisi), Davud Khan (r. 1564-1578) written in February 1578 illustrates this fact. In his letter, the pasha was able to threaten Davud Khan saying that he would unleash the Tatars and Circassians upon

¹²⁹ MD 32, 198-199, entry number is illegible.

Davud Khan's kingdom if the king refused to submit to the sultan.¹³⁰ Similarly, the rulers of the Georgian kingdoms of Mingreli (Dadyan) and Guriel (Guria) responded to the invitation letter of Mustafa Pasha and wrote that they had already submitted to the Porte and were ready to join the pasha's army. They complained, however, about the raids of the Circassians (Adyghe) in their lands. In his response, Mustafa Pasha said that they should no longer worry about such assaults of Circassians because Mingreli and Guriel being now submitted to the Ottoman sultan were to be protected.¹³¹ These examples suggest that by 1578 the Porte had the means of controlling the Adyghe.

An imperial order from May 1578 was sent to the Christian Circassian chiefs in Taman who had been assigned salaries (*sancaks*) by the Porte.¹³² These chiefs were told that the sultan desired the conquest of Shirvan and that the Crimean Tatar army under the command of Adil Girey was en route to participate in the campaign. They were ordered to gather men and join Adil Girey with their own men and to carry out other necessary services for the Ottoman army in the region.¹³³ Unfortunately no names are indicated in this document but it shows that in 1578 there were still many Christian Circassian chiefs in the region, although, as explained above, most of the Janey and other Adyghe Circassians were already Islamized. These chiefs most probably were those who settled around the district of Soğucak in the Taman region and Kemirkoys because, as Ottoman documents from later years indicate, the Circassian chiefs around Soğucak and Kemirkoys had non-Muslim

¹³⁰ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, 24a-24b.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² MD 32, no. 313.

¹³³ Ibid.

names.¹³⁴ We understand that they were not Muslim at that time because the Porte preferred to use Muslim names in correspondence whenever possible.

During the beginning of the war in May 1578, another order from the Porte was sent to all Circassian chiefs located on the route between Kefe and Shirvan, i.e., across the entire North Caucasus. This document also supports my point about the active involvement of the Ottomans and the rise of their influence in the region after 1569. The Circassian chiefs are informed that the Porte “wished to conquer Shirvan and ordered the Tatar army under the command of Adil Girey to set out and assist the main Ottoman army”. “In accordance with their submission to the Sublime Porte,” the Circassian chiefs were ordered to help Adil Girey and his soldiers who would go through their lands. Although these lands were still theoretically considered Crimean territory, now it was the Ottomans who were sending the orders about the movement of the Crimean army and asking for the local ruler’s assistance.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, an approximately one hundred thousand-strong Ottoman army setting off from the Eastern Anatolian strongholds of the empire reached the Ottoman-Safavid border in the summer of 1578. By August 1578, the Ottomans managed to conquer Çıldır and Tbilisi following their victory against the Safavids armies on August 9, 1578. These lands were incorporated into the Ottoman administrative system as the governor-generalships (*beylerbeyilik*) of Çıldır and Tbilisi (Tiflis). However, the Georgian kingdoms were not eliminated as it will be shown below. The Ottoman army then marched toward Shirvan and defeated the Safavid army once again. In September 1578, the whole of the South Caucasus lands from Eastern Anatolia to the Caspian Sea were under the Ottoman

¹³⁴ Order to Circassian Abak Bey (September 1583), MD 51, no. 11. Names of the Soğucak beys mentioned in this document were Kastok, Dutahferuk, Berduk, Kirkan. Kemirkoy bey’s name was Kansutrak.

¹³⁵ MD 32, no. 318.

control.¹³⁶ The Ottomans immediately formed a governor-generalship in Shirvan. Mustafa Pasha appointed Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha as its governor-general and commander (*serdar*) of the Ottoman army that would stay in the Caucasus and further Ottoman conquests in the region.¹³⁷ The forming of administrative districts and obtaining allegiances from local rulers show that the Ottomans intended to stay in the Caucasus and make both the North and South Caucasus integral parts of their empire. Therefore, they wanted to set up a new balance in the Caucasus region and in the northeastern frontiers of the empire.

In contrast to the policies of the Porte before 1569, the Ottomans increased their influence on the local rulers to the point of attaining their submission, which they solidified with rewards. For example, Lala Mustafa Pasha granted the province of Şaburan in the new governor-generalship of Shirvan to the Daghestani *shamkhal*. Shirvan was divided into thirteen sancaks after its annexation to the Ottoman Empire. Another sancak of Shirvan, Ahtı, was given to Tuchalav Burhaneddin of the Avars.¹³⁸ The *shamkhal* visited the camp of the Ottoman army in the north of Shirvan on October 17, 1578 to personally submit to the Porte. Mustafa Pasha in return gave him gifts and granted him the above-mentioned sancak of Şaburan. In addition to the *shamkhal*, Tuchalav Burhaneddin, the Kaytak ruler *Usmi*, the Tabarasan ruler Gazi Salih, and the son of the Kaytak ruler *Usmi* sent their letters and submitted to the Ottoman sultan.¹³⁹ Seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi

¹³⁶ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, 110a-110b.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 111a. Before its further division into three governor-generalships (Ereş, Derbend, and Şemahı) in June 1583, Shirvan was initially divided into thirteen sancaks: Ereş, Kabala, Aktaş, Şaburan, Zerdav, Saderu, Bakü, Salyane, Havz-ı Lahic, Karaulus, Şeki, Ahtı, and Ihr. In addition to granting of Şaburan to the *shamkhal* and Ahtı to Burhaneddin of the Avars, Serdar Mustafa Pasha gave Şeki to Irakli of Kakheti, son of Alexander II.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 124b-125a.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

writes that the Ottomans gave several important fortresses to the *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers to secure their loyalty as they knew that without their loyalty and support it would be very hard to defend and keep these lands.¹⁴⁰ In order to further strengthen the submission of the *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers, Mustafa Pasha arranged a marriage between Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha who was the newly appointed governor-general of Shirvan and a niece of the *shamkhal*.¹⁴¹ The bride was one of the daughters of Tuchalav Burhaneddin, who was the *shamkhal*'s brother. This was similar to the marriage of Ivan IV to the daughter of Temriuk of Kabarda in order to secure Temriuk's allegiance to Muscovy, which will be mentioned in detail in the next chapter. Now, the Ottomans too were using all possible means of manipulation in the region.

Thus, the Ottomans knew that the establishment of a permanent Ottoman presence in the South and North Caucasus would require the allegiance of the Daghestani rulers, especially the *shamkhal*—the strongest one in Daghestan. This is why after granting *sancaks* to the *shamkhal* and to the Avar ruler, an imperial letter was sent by the Porte to the *shamkhal* in January 1579. In this letter, he is praised for his submission and ordered to help by protecting the Ottoman soldiers who were then in Shirvan and in other conquered areas in the Caucasus. He was also advised to continue his submission and expect more rewards in return.¹⁴² This was obviously a part of the renewed and more active version of the Ottoman

¹⁴⁰ Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi seyahatnamesi*, vol. 7, ed. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman, Robert Dankof, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 298, 301.

¹⁴¹ Rahimizade İbrahim Harimi, *Tarih-i Osman Paşa*, ed. Yunus Zeyrek (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), 44. Mustafa Ali notes, "After a while, his [Tuçalav's] daughter was given to Vizier Osman Pasha and it was considered suitable to have "one voice and one direction" with the rulers of Daghestan." *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:306-7.

¹⁴² MD 32, no. 504. (... 'atabe-i 'aliyyemize ' arz-ı ubudiyyet ü ihlas ve izhar-ı sadakat ü iktisas eylemişsin... Yüz göz ak olsun... gerekdir ki, vusul buldukda min ba'd dahi hak-i paye-i sadakatinde sabit-kadem ve rasihdem

strategy of *istimalet* (the policy of reconciliation) that now could compete with the Muscovite policy of co-optation and payments in the region. Such a strategy also fits the general Ottoman method of conquest. If the *shamkhal* and other Shafi Muslim rulers of Daghestan were to become indeed loyal vassals of the sultan, the Porte would be able to have absolute control over the North Caucasus. In this way, the North Caucasus including the Adyghe and Kabardinian Circassians, who were less controllable compared to the Daghestani polities, would be encircled by the vassals of the Porte in the west (Crimean Khanate), in the east (Daghestani rulers) and in the south (the Ottoman province of Shirvan and Georgian kingdoms).

The Porte continued to follow the same policy throughout the Safavid war and its aftermath. For this reason, the Porte also sent a *hil'at* to the *shamkhal* in January 1579 because he had fulfilled his duties towards the sultan. He was ordered to accept the *hil'at*, wear it, and continue to serve the sultan to be further rewarded.¹⁴³ The *shamkhal* indeed served the Ottomans in the region well. This was the time in late November 1578 when the Crimean Tatar army was defeated in Shirvan by the Safavids and their commander, Adil Girey, was captured.¹⁴⁴ The Ottoman army which was in Şemahı under the command of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha decided to move to Derbend where a defense against the Safavid armies was more likely to succeed due to the strong fortifications around the city. At that

olup ol canibde alıkonulan 'asakir-i nusret-eserimizle yek-dil ü yek-cihet olup anun gibi Kızılbaş-ı bed-ma'aş tarafından üzerlerine hücum olunursa gereği gibi mu'avenet ve müzaheret olunup...) Eng. tr. (You have been subservient, honest, and loyal to our exalted Porte...May you be proud...It is ordered that when [the order] arrives you should remain firm and unwavering in your loyalty and be on the same terms with our victorious soldiers stationed in these regions and, in case of an attack by the ill-fated Kızılbaş [Safavids], you should assist and support them [our soldiers].)

¹⁴³ MD 32, 198-199, entry number is illegible.

¹⁴⁴ Order to the Crimean Khan, MD 32, no. 457.

time, the *shamkhal* had been with Osman Pasha in Şemahı and on the route he accompanied and guided the Ottoman army as far as Derbend. He advised the pasha that the Ottoman army should move quickly because there were many rebellious tribes around Derbend. He was worried that these tribes and chiefs could raid the Ottoman soldiers on their way to the city.¹⁴⁵

Aside from being a strategic fortress for controlling passage along the coast, Derbend was situated at a strategic location in terms of controlling Daghestan. It was a stone fortress located between the Principality of Tabarasan and the Usmiat of the Kaytuks. Osman Pasha used it well to aid in securing Ottoman control over the local rulers. He was already secure in his dealings with the Daghestani *shamkhal* and Tuchalav Burhaneddin of the Avars. As pointed out earlier, Osman Pasha was married to Tuchalav's daughter and Tuchalav and the *shamkhal* were brothers. As we understand from chronicles written by eye-witnesses such as Rahimizade or Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, the *shamkhal* and most other Daghestani rulers were generally obedient in these years. On the other hand, one of the strongest rulers, the Usmi of the Kaytaks, became an issue for the Ottomans in mid-1578. His men began to steal from the Ottoman soldiers who were outside of the fortress of Derbend. The pasha ordered his soldiers to capture those people. In the struggle, some Kaytaks including a few men of the ruler were killed. Outraged, the Usmi ordered his men to kill every Ottoman soldier they came across.¹⁴⁶ Osman Pasha's reaction was vigorous. The Ottomans assaulted and destroyed

¹⁴⁵ Rahimizade, *Tarih-i Osman Paşa*, 39.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 45-46.

villages of the Kaytaks and killed many of their men. This gave an opportunity for the pasha to subdue the Kaytaks and other rebellious tribes in Daghestan.¹⁴⁷

During this period, as the documents show us, the Porte and the commanders in the field worked in harmony. The orders sent from the Porte after this incident, indicate that the Usmi of Kaytak was disgraced by the Porte. Although the Porte sent letters to the rulers in Daghestan, one was not sent to the Usmi of Kaytak until April 1582 when he was asked to assist Ottoman soldiers going from Kefe to Derbend. He was reminded of his submission to the Porte and ordered to let the Ottomans pass through his land and perform necessary services.¹⁴⁸ A similar order regarding the Ottoman soldiers was sent to the *shamkhal*, Saltanay Bey of Tuman, Halil Bey, and İsmail Bey.¹⁴⁹ There are many orders for the *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers in the 1580s regarding the need for safety on the northern Caucasian route on which soldiers, *çavuşes*, and treasury traveled from Kefe to Derbend.¹⁵⁰

This supply route was of extreme importance as men, money, and materiel were sent to the Ottoman army stationed in Derbend and Shirvan by this route. According to the Ottoman chroniclers, travel from Kefe to Derbend took eighty days in total. Ottoman chroniclers Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali and Peçevi İbrahim give a detailed itinerary of Cafer Pasha's travel with 86 loads (*yük*) of treasury money from Kefe to Derbend in 1582. According to them, the Ottoman army consisting of timariots from Köstendil, Silistre, and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁴⁸ MD 44, no. 87.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Apart from these, see MD 42, no. 382; MD 44 nos. 122, 182, 190; and MD 51, no. 10.

Niğbolu, three thousand janissaries, and the entire division (*bölük*) of the *silahdars* (lit., weapon masters) took four days to travel from Kefe to Kerch. Then, the Ottomans crossed the straits of Kerch with galleys and other ships in fifteen days. They arrived in the fortress of Temrük in the Taman Peninsula in four days. They rested in Temrük for four days and set off for the Kuban River, reaching it in five days. The Circassians (the Adyghes) living in the vicinity had already prepared rafts on the Kuban at around the confluence of the Kuban and Laba rivers. Ottoman soldiers used these rafts to cross the river and paid 5 *akçe* per horse and 15 *akçe* per cart. They followed the river for four days and reached the lands of the Kemirkoys and then the steppes (*heyhat sahrası* [lit. “the dessert of regrets”] in the chronicles). The Ottomans were able to pass through the steppes in twenty days by following the Kuban and Urup rivers. It took five days to travel to Beshtav from the Urup River. From Beshtav it took another five days to reach the Terek River. Then, the Ottoman army traveled to Kabarda. Kabardinian chiefs constructed eight portable bridges (*cisr*) on the Terek and Sulak rivers to assist the Ottoman army cross the river.¹⁵¹ It took three days to cross the rivers and get to the lands of the *shamkhal*. In November 1582 and on the eightieth day, Cafer Pasha and his soldiers reached Derbend.¹⁵²

It was in that same year that the *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers began worrying about their independence due to the increasing Ottoman interference and Crimean Tatar incursions in the Caucasus. According to the Ottoman chroniclers, it was mostly the latter that prompted the Daghestani rulers and Georgians to send an envoy to Imam Kuli

¹⁵¹ Ottomans paid for such services provided by the Kabardinians. During his travels in the North Caucasus, Evliya Çelebi saw that the Kabardinians possessed many Ottoman *akçes* minted during the reign of Murad III. Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi seyahatnamesi*, vol. 7, 288.

¹⁵² *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Kühü'l-ahbar'ında*, 3:401-3; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:76-78.

Khan of the Safavids to ask for help. The local rulers thought, “Since nothing has been done against them (the Crimean Tatars), their number keeps increasing. If they are not put to the sword soon, they will harm us. Our territories, which have been in our possession for so many years, will be lost.”¹⁵³ However, they also knew that they were not strong enough to challenge the Ottomans and the Tatars. That is why they sent an envoy to the Safavids. Imam Kulı Khan reported the alliance of these local rulers against the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans to the Safavid shah and prepared for an offensive, possibly hoping to get support from the Daghestani rulers as well. He mustered his army which included some nobles from the Georgians. Despite their grievances, Daghestani rulers chose not to support the Safavids by sending men but rather decided to bide their time. The Ottomans soundly defeated the Safavid army of Imam Kulı in 1583. Subsequently, captured Georgian nobles were executed and their heads were sent to the King Alexander II of Kahketi as a warning. The Daghestani rulers, who did not send any men to the Safavid army and thus escaped the wrath of the Ottomans, opted to continue serving the sultan.¹⁵⁴

Following the arrival of Cafer Pasha and defeat of the Imam Kulı’s army, Özdemirolu Osman Pasha set off for Istanbul via Kefe in October 1583 and left Cafer Pasha in Derbend.¹⁵⁵ Before Osman Pasha left Derbend, he was sent 100 *hil’ats* from the Porte for distribution among the Circassian and Daghestani rulers in the North Caucasus as a reward for their services and in order to strengthen their allegiance. In a letter sent to him from the

¹⁵³ (Bunların tedarüki görilmeye gitdikçe çoğalmadın kılıçdan geçirilmeye giderek zararları bize sirayet eder bunca yıldan berü tasarrufumuzdaki mülk-i mevrusumuz elden gider...), *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Kühü'l-ahbar'ında*, 3:403-4; cf. (...mülk-i mevrusumuza ulaşmadın vaktiyle tedariklerin görmezsek bize dahi zararları sirayet itmekde ıstıbah yokdur.) Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:78-79.

¹⁵⁴ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Kühü'l-ahbar'ında*, 3:404-14; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:80-85.

¹⁵⁵ MD 44, nos. 87, 122, 182, 190.

Porte in September 1583, it was said that Ferhad Kethüda, who was bringing money to Derbend, was to give 21 of these *hil'ats* to the rulers on his route from Kefe to Derbend and the pasha would decide whom to give the remaining 79 *hil'ats*.¹⁵⁶

The Ottomans intensified their active policy of subduing local chiefs and cementing their allegiance to the Porte in the Western and Kabardinian part of the North Caucasus as well. Himself being of Kabardinian origin, Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha must have understood the strategic position of Kabarda.¹⁵⁷ Kabarda was extremely important for the Ottoman supply route in the North Caucasus and for the future of Ottoman presence in the region. For this reason, as soon as he settled into Derbend and subdued local rulers in Daghestan through diplomacy or force, in November 1580 he proposed to the Porte that two fortresses should be erected in the North Caucasus, one on the Terek and one on the Kuban, which would secure the supply route from Kefe to Derbend and reinforce the Ottoman presence in Kabarda and in the North Caucasus in general. Osman Pasha also recommended Behram Bey, who was a Circassian chief in his service, for the construction of the proposed fortresses.¹⁵⁸ However, this project was not supported by the Crimean khan and eventually abandoned. The farsightedness of Osman Pasha became obvious when on his way back from Derbend to Kefe and Istanbul his army was attacked by the Cossacks in 1583 and lost many men and much materiel. He followed the same North Caucasus route that has been laid out above. However,

¹⁵⁶ MD 51, no. 23.

¹⁵⁷ Asafi Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2006), 379. Asafi Dal Mehmed Çelebi states that Osman Pasha's father side was of Kabardinian origin. Peçevi records that Osman Pasha's father, Özdemir Pasha, was one of the Circassian notables of Egypt. Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:17. Also see *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 2:22, 30. Therefore, Osman Pasha must have born in Egypt but was aware of his Kabardinian origins.

¹⁵⁸ Orders to the Crimean Khan, the sancakbey and *nazır* of Kefe, MD 43, nos. 196, 206, 247, 480.

due to the Cossack threat and lack of *palankas* or fortresses that could shelter the Ottoman soldiers and their belongings along the route, he and his soldiers had to travel as fast as they could across the North Caucasus steppes. They crossed the steppes within a mere twelve days, compared to the twenty days that it took Cafer Pasha and his soldiers.¹⁵⁹

One of the most trusted Kabardinian chiefs for the Ottomans in these years was the *sancakbey* of Kabarda. Just as the Daghestani rulers were trusted with the Ottoman supply route in their polities, Kabardinian chiefs were sent orders to ensure the security of the Ottoman soldiers and materiel going through his lands.¹⁶⁰ The said governor (*sancakbey*) of Kabarda was most probably Mehmed Bey who traveled to Istanbul before the Ottoman-Safavid war and took the title of *sancakbey* as mentioned above. We also have several Ottoman documents from the same period using the designation “Kabartay Bey” without giving an actual name.¹⁶¹ In addition to these, some other Kabardinian chiefs were solidly on the Ottoman side. One of them was even a relative of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha through Osman Pasha’s father side. His name was Aslanbek, who was one of the strongest chiefs in Kabarda and was at one point even chosen the *pshihua* of Kabarda.¹⁶² Aslanbek submitted to the Porte most probably thanks to the efforts of Osman Pasha. Orders were sent to him in the 1580s about security of the north Caucasus route and necessary services for the Ottoman army in the region.¹⁶³ Although he was portrayed as a very important figure in Kabarda by the Muscovite sources, in the *mühimme* records he is mentioned just another chief in the

¹⁵⁹ *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında*, 3:415-19.

¹⁶⁰ MD 42, no. 382.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., Order to Kabartay Bey, (1582), MD 44, no. 122; order to Kabartay Mirza (1582), MD 44, no. 218.

¹⁶² Asafi Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, 379.

¹⁶³ MD 44, no. 182, 190; MD 51, no. 10.

region. However, we know from contemporary chronicles that he was quite active in his service and that he was one of the Kabardinian chiefs who constructed bridges on the Terek for the Ottoman armies and guided them through Kabarda.¹⁶⁴

Another important figure who was on the Ottoman side was Gazi Mirza (Kazy Murza in Muscovite sources or Kordanuk in Circassian), who received several orders from the Porte about the safety of the supply route.¹⁶⁵ He was also one of the chiefs who constructed bridges for the Ottoman army along with Aslanbek and Kaplan.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, a certain Mehmed Bey of Kabarda submitted himself to the Porte and was invited to Istanbul on January 21, 1583.¹⁶⁷ He could hardly be the same Mehmed mentioned just above because that one had already submitted and been to Istanbul.

In September 1583, Ferhad Kethüda was on his way to Derbend from Kefe with money. For his travel, orders were sent to the Kabardinian chiefs, Solokh, Beşir (Betsin, Başı), Abak (Ibak in Muscovite sources), Bozok (Buzuruk in Muscovite sources), Aslanbek and his brother Yansokh. They were ordered to assist Ferhad Kethüda and his men and each received a *hil'at* from the Porte.¹⁶⁸ Among these chiefs, apart from Aslanbek, Solokh was an interesting and important figure in Kabardinian politics. One of his daughters was married to the Crimean khan and another one to the *shamkhal* of Daghestan. He was also a strong chief in the region. As indicated in the Muscovite sources, he was Muslim just like Alkas of

¹⁶⁴ Asafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, 379-80.

¹⁶⁵ MD 44, nos. 182, 218.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ MD 48, no. 730.

¹⁶⁸ MD 51, no. 10.

Kabarda, who was not mentioned in the Ottoman sources but apparently worked for the Ottomans. In 1589 Solokh's villages were attacked by the Muscovite forces because of his allegiance to the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans.¹⁶⁹

As explained earlier, this active policy of subduing local rulers in Kabarda had started right after the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569 with the Crimean campaign to punish the pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs in 1570. Since then, the Porte drew many Kabardinian chiefs to its side. Such efforts intensified and bore fruit during the Ottoman-Safavid War mostly because of the Ottoman supply route in the North Caucasus that went through Kabarda. Although the Porte managed to acquire enough support in Kabarda, it was still unable to control all of it due to the existence of a strong pro-Muscovite fraction kept alive by the descendants of Temriuk. These chiefs were supported by the Muscovites from Terek and Astrakhan and they were in conflict with the Kabardinian chiefs who sided with the Ottomans until the late 1590s when the Muscovites had to abandon North Caucasus and retreat to Astrakhan. Yet, as can be seen, the Ottoman influence in Kabarda was not as strong as it was in Daghestan.

As for the Adyghe polities including the Janey, Besleney and other smaller ones in and around Taman and Beshtav region, the Porte was even stronger in these regions due to their proximity to Kefe and Azak where many Ottoman soldiers and weapons were stationed for the war in the Caucasus. The Muscovite influence which was an issue between 1552 and 1570 did not survive in the northwestern Caucasus at all. Most of their rulers had already submitted to the Porte and received orders from Istanbul during the Ottoman campaign. We

¹⁶⁹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 182-83.

have seen that the Circassian chiefs in the Taman region were directly attached to Kefe and received salary from the revenues of Kefe. Thus, they were assigned the duty of protecting those areas and helping defenses of Kefe and Azak when necessary. Compared to the orders sent to Circassian chiefs in Kabarda and to Daghestani rulers, the number of orders sent to the Adyghe Circassian chiefs is low. In my opinion, the reason is that most of the time the governor-general of Kefe and governor of Azak communicated directly with them and arranged for the execution of services required of them. However, the Porte still needed to secure their allegiance during the war and several times had to send imperial orders to facilitate this.

After the war broke out, the orders dispatched to the Taman and Beshtav regions were related to transportation and security along the transport route.¹⁷⁰ In September 1583, the Porte asked the *nazır* of Kefe that the Circassian chiefs who were entitled to receive salaries from Kefe revenue be paid on time and in full.¹⁷¹ Obviously this was done to ensure their loyalty and services which were badly needed at that time. At the same time in September, Janey chiefs Ahmed and Davud; Ada Beyi Mehmed; Soğucak chiefs Kastok, Dutahferuk, Berduk, Kirkan; Besleney chief Mehmed; Kemirkoy chief Kansutrak received orders from the Porte regarding Fuad Kethüda's travel to Derbend with treasury from the Porte. They were sent *hil'ats* and ordered to ensure the safety of Fuad Kethüda and the treasury.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Order to the Circassian chiefs in Taman and Kuban (September 1583), MD 51, no. 11; order to the Circassian chiefs in Taman (July 1586), MD 61, no 41.

¹⁷¹ MD 51, no. 24.

¹⁷² MD 51, no. 23.

Soğucak was a fortress attached to Kefe in the Taman region on the Black Sea shore close to today's Novorossiisk. Those non-Muslim —probably Christian—Circassian chiefs were among those who had been ordered to join the Ottoman army in its war against the Safavids.¹⁷³ It is also seen that the Kemirkoy chief was not Muslim. However, as we understand from *mühimme* registers, they were all assigned *sancaks* and received salaries from the Porte.¹⁷⁴ It is also interesting to note that by this time the Besleney chief was Muslim. Namely, Islamization of the Adyghe Circassians also escalated in the 1580s and 1590. To illustrate, another Circassian chief from the Taman region, Bolayıkoğlu of the Sozomuko tribe in the Kuban region, who was a Christian as we understand from his *elkab* (titles), now wanted to convert Islam. The Porte wrote to him that he should come to Istanbul to be rewarded. Converting to Islam meant much potential gain for such chiefs. Their rewards were likely to increase and they would be able to tax their subjects in accordance with Ottoman regulations. In the same letter, we understand that Bolayıkoğlu also requested from the Porte the right to collect taxes (*haraç*) from his subjects, which was granted.¹⁷⁵

We can easily say that the western part of the Circassian lands was completely submitted to the Porte and no other imperial power could interfere in their affairs after 1570. The Porte even erected fortresses for the Circassian chiefs who sometimes needed protection from their enemies, especially the Cossacks. One of these Circassian chiefs, Mehmed,

¹⁷³ MD 32, no. 313.

¹⁷⁴ MD 68, no. 96.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. *Haraç* is the Islamic tax demanded from non-Muslim subjects of the empire. The Circassian chief wanted to collect non-Muslim tax from his own subjects as an Ottoman official. This also indicates that his subjects were probably Christians as he was before his conversion to Islam. The Ottoman text is as follows: (*..tarık-ı İslamiyeye meyl ve sulükun olduğundan ma'ada 'atabe-i 'ulyama ita'at ve iltica idüb re'ayanı haraca kesmek ve destgahımıza gelmek babında ruhsatı 'ali-penahım rica eylediğün ecilden 'izn-i hümayunum irzani kılınmışdır buyurdum ki vusul buldukta tehir itmeyüb müşarileyh çavuşumla asitane-i sa'adetime gelesin...*)

received in October 1593 his first yearly 120,000 *akçe* salary for defending Ottoman possessions and his subjects from the raids of the Cossacks.¹⁷⁶ A month later, the Porte ordered Boğazcık fortress be repaired for his use.¹⁷⁷

At this point, it should be noted that although the Ottomans carried out an active policy of drawing local rulers in the North Caucasus to their side and most of the time dealt directly with these rulers, they still respected a certain degree of the Crimean Khanate's authority over the Circassian tribes. Despite their newly attained tighter control, the Ottomans knew that they might still need the Crimean khan's collaboration in the North Caucasus due to Tatars' highly mobile army and experience in the Circassian lands. To illustrate, it was Khan Gazi Girey who advised the Porte about the services of the above mentioned Circassian chief, Mehmed. Mehmed was praised by the khan for his help in the defense of Temrük against the Cossacks.¹⁷⁸ However, this was more of a precaution. The Porte's influence and control over the Circassian polities and chiefs in the northwest Caucasus was unquestionable. For example, in 1595 the Porte ordered the Circassian chiefs who received salaries to join the defense of Azak and the governor-general of Kefe was ordered to punish those who did not obey this order.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, the Porte could also order them to join Ottoman troops in their expeditions against the Cossacks. An order from the Porte was sent in 1595 to the Circassian chiefs with salaries to join Hasan Pasha of Kefe,

¹⁷⁶ Order to the beylerbeyi of Kefe and kadı of Taman, MD 71, no. 205.

¹⁷⁷ Order to Circassian Mehmed and kadı of Taman, MD 71, no. 162.

¹⁷⁸ MD 71, no. 205.

¹⁷⁹ MD 73, no. 855.

who was fighting against the Don Cossacks.¹⁸⁰ When such Circassian chiefs were mobilized for expeditions or defense of Ottoman cities, Ottoman governors could be asked to protect the Circassian realms from enemies. For example, when the Circassian chiefs were with the governor-general of Kefe in 1586 because of “disorders that exist among the Crimean Tatars,” the governor of Azak was ordered to protect the “island” (i.e., the Taman peninsula) from its enemies.¹⁸¹

Another important piece of the North Caucasus puzzle was the Nogays. By this time, they were divided into two hordes: the Lesser Nogays (*Kiçi Nogay/Kazy Ulus*) in the Kuban region under the control of the Crimean khan and sancakbey of Azak and the Greater Nogays (*Ulu Nogay*) under the control of Muscovy. The Lesser Nogays actively participated in the Crimean raids in the Caucasus. The Porte had no complaints when they were controlled by the Crimean khan and the governor of Azak. However, the Porte’s control over the Nogays was not solid. In 1584 when Islam Girey replaced Mehmed Girey II with the help of the Porte, some of the Nogays turned against the Porte. Mehmed Girey II’s sons, Saadet, Sefa, and Murad fled to seek refuge in different places. Murad went to Moscow where he was welcomed by the tsar who wanted to be influential in Crimean politics. Saadet Girey went to the Nogays with the aim of taking Crimea with his army of Nogays and loyal Tatars. The alliance of these Nogays with the fugitive *hanzade* caused worries at the Porte. Nogay Mirza Yahşi Saat and others were immediately sent orders in 1585 about the fugitive Gireys. They were asked to assist Islam Girey if the *hanzade* chose to attack the Crimea.¹⁸² The same order

¹⁸⁰ MD 74, no. 137.

¹⁸¹ MD 58, no. 728.

¹⁸² MD 58, no. 454.

was also forwarded to the Janey chief because some Circassians were known to have joined Saadet Girey. Despite these orders, the Nogays collaborated with the fugitive *hanzade* and chose to attack the khanate but were defeated by Ottoman forces at Kefe. This incident, notwithstanding, the Porte chose to use diplomacy in order to secure the allegiance of the Nogays. Another order upon the advice of Khan Islam Girey was sent to Yahşi Saat Mirza in which the mirza was praised for his services to the sultan and granted a *hil'at*. Moreover, he was ordered to honor his submission the Crimean khan and to the Porte and obey the Crimean khan.¹⁸³

Submission of Urus Mirza of the Greater Nogays to the Porte in 1574 has already been mentioned in this chapter. Although it is known Urus that Mirza submitted simultaneously to the Muscovites and the Porte, he was still utilized by the Ottomans in their war against the Safavids, which worried the Muscovites. In fact, even before 1574 the Muscovites were aware that Urus Mirza had as an objective to counter-balance Muscovite influence over the Greater Nogay Horde with the Ottomans. Simon Maltsev was a Muscovite envoy sent to Urus Mirza in the spring of 1568 in order to learn intentions of the Nogays in case of an Ottoman attack on Astrakhan. However, on his way back to Muscovy, Maltsev was captured by Kazy Mirza of the Lesser Nogays and sent to the governor of Azak.¹⁸⁴ He was then given to Kasım Bey of Kefe as a slave. Maltsev was with Kasım Bey and the Ottoman army during the campaign of 1569. After he managed to return to Muscovy in 1577, he reported to the tsar that during the campaign Urus Mirza visited Kasım Bey and said that he would obey the sultan and Kasım Bey but not the Crimean khan with whom he had a

¹⁸³ MD 58, no. 614.

¹⁸⁴ P. A. Sadikov, "Pokhod Tatar i Turok," 131-38; Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, 33.

feud.¹⁸⁵ The same Urus Mirza joined the Crimean army during the Ottoman-Safavid war and raided Safavid territories in 1578. He was even granted a *sancak* (salary). In addition to these, the Porte ordered the governor of Azak to give yearly salaries to the mirzas of Urus from the custom revenues of Azak in 1579 because “these mirzas would bring ten thousand soldiers to fight against the Safavids.”¹⁸⁶ It is interesting to see that by that time the Porte was using tactics similar to those of Muscovy, namely, sending gifts and granting salaries in its dealings with the Nogays. Urus Mirza was at the same time receiving salary and gifts from the Muscovite tsar but always complained that what he received from Muscovy was not adequate. So this could be a reason why, at least for the time being, he decided to approach the Crimean khan and Ottomans in 1578-1579 and take advantage of the war against the Safavids to partake in the opportunity to gain booty and slaves.

With these developments, Ottoman policy was becoming more and more active, manipulative, and influential in the North Caucasus. However, this was not the high point. The most important turning point for the local rulers of the North Caucasus, especially those of the Kabarda and Daghestan was to come in the late 1590s. The main dynamic of this change was the Muscovite military pressure from the Terek and Astrakhan towards Kabarda and Daghestan.

In fact, the Muscovite activities in the North Caucasus had already become an important issue for the Ottomans when the Porte was informed in 1579 that the Muscovites

¹⁸⁵ Report of Simon Maltsev (1569) in Sadikov, “Pokhod Tatar i Turok,” 153-64 and Kurat, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu*, appendices, 6-7.

¹⁸⁶ MD 38, no. 98.

were sending weapons to the Safavids.¹⁸⁷ In addition, Muscovite involvement in Kabarda never ceased despite tsar's promises in 1571 to demolish Muscovite fortress and his recognition of Ottoman-Crimean sovereignty over the North Caucasus. As mentioned above, the Muscovites had thereafter repaired some fortresses along the Terek in 1575. Moreover the Cossacks, whom the Ottomans considered to be under Muscovy's control, were still active and posed a great threat to the Ottomans both in the North Caucasus and in the north of the Black Sea. They attacked Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha and his soldiers near Sunzha River in 1583. Such a daring attack was not acceptable to the Porte, especially on such crucial transport route as the one from Kefe to Derbend. The Ottomans lost many men and much materiel.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, one year later, in 1584, the tsar welcomed Crimean the *hanzade* Murad Girey in Moscow, which was a huge issue at the Porte because it meant that the tsar was ready to take part in internal Crimean Khanate politics whereas the Ottomans considered such activity to be their sole prerogative. In May 1585, a letter was sent to the Muscovite tsar with the Muscovite envoy who had been in Istanbul. The tsar was asked to send Murad Girey to Istanbul.¹⁸⁹ But this did not yield any results and Muscovite activities continued. The Porte then tried to ensure the safety of the supply route in the North Caucasus against Cossack or combined Muscovite-Cossack attacks. Cafer Pasha, who was in Derbend in 1585, was asked to submit his opinion about construction of a fortress on the Terek to

¹⁸⁷ MD 32, no. 673.

¹⁸⁸ Asafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, 377-78.

¹⁸⁹ MD 58, no. 203. In this letter, the Muscovite tsar was addressed as a vassal of the Ottoman sultan, it was said, "the tsar's submission to the Porte made the sultan happy."

secure the route between Kefe and Derbend.¹⁹⁰ Again, the plan to build a fortress was not materialized.

Upon these developments, in 1587 the Ottoman Imperial Council decided to undertake a second campaign to capture Astrakhan. Related to this project, an order was sent to Urus Mirza on September 24, 1587. He was ordered to join the Ottoman army and serve the sultan in accordance with his submission and thereby receive more rewards.¹⁹¹ Piyale Pasha received an order to be the commander of the Ottoman army to capture Astrakhan and told to be on good terms with Urus Mirza of the Greater Nogays.¹⁹² Learning some lessons from their previous undertaking in 1569, the Porte this time sent a special order to the strongest bey of the Crimean Khanate, the bey of the Şirin tribe, Ali. The Şirin tribe had been a supporter of the Ottomans since the time of Mengli Girey and Sultan Mehmed II and they had been very instrumental in the establishment of the Ottoman protectorate over Crimea. In this letter, Ali Bey was reminded that the reason for the failure in 1569 was, “because the aforementioned khan (Devlet Girey) had objections to the conquest of Astrakhan, he did not guide the army of Islam (the Ottoman army) on the right route but led them through difficult roads.” He was ordered to obey the sultan in this campaign along with Khan Islam Girey who would also join the Ottoman army and serve faithfully.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ MD 60, no. 271.

¹⁹¹ MD 62, no. 231

¹⁹² MD 62, no. 230.

¹⁹³ (...*Ejderhanın feth olunması müşarileyh hanın hilaf-ı mürzisi olmagla... 'asakir-i İslamı togru yoldan alub götürmeyüb sa 'abü'l-mürur yollardan alub götürüb...*) MD 62, no. 226.

Although capture of Astrakhan would have been the best way to safeguard the Ottoman position and possessions in the North Caucasus and even aid in containing the Crimean khanate, this time because of the war effort against the Safavids, the proposed campaign had to be shelved. In spite of this, in 1587 the Porte managed to use the Crimean Tatars and a joint force of Ottoman-Crimean soldiers to soundly defeat the pro-Muscovite party in Kabarda. By this time, however, the Muscovite side was not as defensive as it had been during the 1569 campaign and its aftermath. Due to the imminent Ottoman threat against Astrakhan and their assault on Kabarda in 1587, the Muscovites decided to build a strong fortress at the mouth of the Terek River in 1588. And through this stronghold, as we will see, they managed to revive and support the pro-Muscovite party in Kabarda.¹⁹⁴

The Ottoman-Safavid War ended with a peace treaty signed in 1590, leaving the Caucasus under Ottoman suzerainty. Yet, the Ottomans were still watching Muscovite activities with anxiety and they did not abandon their activities in the North Caucasus. In November 1591, the Porte was informed by Hasan Pasha of Shirvan that the Muscovites were collaborating with some tribes in Daghestan and planning to attack Ottoman possessions in the North Caucasus. In response, the Porte advised him to be on the alert and communicate with the *shamkhal*, to whom an order had also been sent, and other rulers in Daghestan.¹⁹⁵ By this time, the Muscovites managed to build two more fortresses, further south from the Terek—one on the Sunzha River and another on the Sulak River. Moreover, they had taken Alexander II of Kakheti under their protection. For all these reasons, the Ottomans wanted to eliminate the Muscovite threat in the region once and for all. Ottoman

¹⁹⁴ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 59-62.

¹⁹⁵ MD 67, no. 519.

officials in Shirvan were ordered to obey Hasan Pasha if he decided to attack the Muscovites and their allies in the region.¹⁹⁶ An imperial letter was dispatched to the *shamkhal* in 1592 ordering him to assist Hasan Pasha because of the increasing Muscovite danger in the region.¹⁹⁷ The Porte was informed that the Muscovites had more than ten thousand musket-bearing soldiers in its fortresses along the Terek. What especially alarmed the Ottomans was that by July 1592 the Muscovites were collaborating with the Circassian chiefs of Kabarda and they were even in contact with the *shamkhal*, Kumyks, and some other Daghestani rulers.¹⁹⁸ In response, a letter was sent to the Crimean khan who was ordered to muster his army to capture the Muscovite fortresses on the Terek, which the given document states, were too close to Daghestan and Derbend. In other words, the Ottomans felt that regular imperial possessions were under direct threat. The khan was also asked to learn what the objectives of the Muscovites were and to send spies to acquire knowledge on how to proceed with preparations to capture these fortresses.¹⁹⁹ This kind of intensification of Muscovite activity and encroachment on the Caucasus coincided with the start of the Habsburg-Ottoman War in 1593 in Central Europe. At that time, the bulk of the Ottoman army was far from the Caucasus. In spite of the war in the western front, the Porte did not abandon the region and formed an anti-Muscovite alliance in Daghestan and Kabarda by manipulating local rulers.

Things got worse for the Ottomans in 1594 when their armies were still in Central Europe. The Porte was informed that the Muscovites had constructed two fortresses in the

¹⁹⁶ MD 67, no. 520.

¹⁹⁷ MD 69, no. 440.

¹⁹⁸ MD 69, no. 447.

¹⁹⁹ MD 69, no. 447.

lands of the *shamkhal* and stationed five-six thousand musket-bearing soldiers in them and also that in the face of this development the *shamkhal* fled to the mountainous regions.²⁰⁰ In an imperial letter sent from the Porte in April 1594, the *shamkhal* was told that Cafer Pasha, who was in Derbend, was ordered to help the *shamkhal* with Ottoman soldiers and heavy weapons and take the *shamkhal*'s lands back from the Muscovites. The *shamkhal* was asked to join Cafer Pasha and destroy the Muscovite fortresses and troops in his lands.²⁰¹ As we can see, the Ottomans never abandoned their client, the *shamkhal*, even if they were engaged in Central Europe. This area was critical for their presence in the Caucasus as a whole and for possible future expansion towards the north.

The Ottomans were also aware of the fact that if they allowed the Muscovite fortresses to remain in Daghestan, the local rulers would eventually obey them and the whole of Daghestan would be lost. The Porte was informed by its agents that the objective of the Muscovites was to conquer Daghestan and then the Ottoman governor-generalship of Derbend.²⁰² Although the Muscovite sources do not confirm that Muscovy intended to attack and conquer Derbend, it was normal for the Ottomans to assume that this could happen because of the Muscovite activities such as constructing fortresses in Daghestan and negotiating with the Safavids for an alliance against the Ottoman Empire. The Porte was also afraid that the situation in Daghestan could influence the Georgian kingdoms, which desired to side with the tsar.²⁰³ The Porte was later informed that Tarku was taken and the

²⁰⁰ MD 72, no. 277

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Order to Cafer Paşa, MD 72, no. 279.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Muscovites were constructing two more fortresses to be manned with musketeers.²⁰⁴ At this point, the Ottomans organized their agents (governors-generals of Derbend and Shirvan) in the region, the local rulers in Daghestan (the *shamkhal*, *usmi* of the Kaytaks, and *masum* of Tabarastan) to work together for the complete removal of the Muscovites from Daghestan. The Porte sent copies of the letters addressed to the *shamkhal*, *usmi*, and *masum* to Cafer Pasha so that he would know in detail what was said to them and act accordingly. Cafer Pasha was ordered to prepare cannons and soldiers for the campaign. He was to communicate with local rulers and then together with them raze to the ground the Muscovite fortresses in the lands of the *shamkhal*.²⁰⁵ Interestingly, another order about this issue was sent to the king of Kakheti, Alexander II (Zegem Hakimi Levendoğlu Aleksander in Ottoman sources). He was informed of the situation in Daghestan and ordered to join the Ottoman army in Shirvan under the command of Cafer Pasha.²⁰⁶ This order shows how the Porte tried to manipulate King Alexander II, i.e., the carrot policy (*istimalet*) because the Ottomans had already known that he submitted to the Muscovite tsar.²⁰⁷ Eventually the united forces of Daghestani rulers and Ottoman soldiers with cannons from Derbend and Shirvan managed to re-take Tarku defeating the Muscovite army soundly in 1594. All the Muscovite fortresses were destroyed and the Muscovites soldiers were expelled from Daghestan. Following this, the Ottomans and Muscovites returned to acceptance of the *status quo ante*. However, the Muscovite interest in

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ MD 72. This order is located between order no. 277 and no. 278. The beginning of it is missing. Apparently, archivists thought that it was a part of order no. 277 and did not give it a separate number. However, as it is understood from the content and style of the document, it is not the continuation of no. 277, which is addressed to the *shamkhal* of Daghestan. According to its content and style, this order must be addressed to Cafer Pasha in Shirvan.

²⁰⁶ MD 72, no. 278.

²⁰⁷ MD 72, no. 279.

Daghestan and Kabarda would not end until 1604-5. 1604 was a time when the Ottomans were fighting in the west with the Habsburgs and in the east with the new shah of the Safavids, Abbas. Considering it a good opportunity to break the Ottoman hold in the North Caucasus, Muscovite Tsar Boris Godunov sent two armies into Daghestan and Kabarda. Although engaged on both frontiers, the Ottomans acted vigorously and united the Daghestani rulers once again. The Muscovite armies were again defeated soundly and their fortresses along the Terek, Sunzha and Sulak rivers were destroyed by the Ottoman-Daghestani forces supported by the Kabardinian chiefs. The Muscovites had to retreat all the way back to Astrakhan and remained uninterested in the North Caucasus affairs until the time of Peter the Great.

In sum, the argument that the Ottomans were not active in the north especially after their failure in 1569 cannot be borne out of evidence. On the contrary, learning many lessons from this failure the Porte realized that an active policy in the North Caucasus was a must in order to secure their possessions in the northeastern parts of the Black Sea and check Muscovite ambitions. The Ottomans, immediately after 1569, embarked upon a very active involvement in the affairs of the North Caucasus through a policy of winning over local rulers, ensuring their submission, and converting them to Islam. 1578 Ottoman-Safavid war proposed a second chance for the Ottomans. Instead of using their old tactics and taking the offensive against the Safavid Iran from their Eastern Anatolian strongholds, the Ottomans decided to use the North Caucasus route as well while conquering the South Caucasus from the Safavids. At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans realized most of their objectives in the North Caucasus. Immediately after the Safavid war, in spite of being engaged in the west, they managed to secure their control of

Daghestan and successfully check Muscovite ambitions. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, they united their clients in the North Caucasus one more time against the Muscovites and forced Muscovite forces retreat all the way back to Astrakhan. Thus, fifty years of Muscovite struggle to penetrate the North Caucasus that had started with their annexation of Astrakhan in 1556 bore no fruit due to an active and fully adequate northern policy of the Ottoman Porte.

CHAPTER 3

MUSCOVY AND THE NORTH CAUCASUS

This chapter examines Muscovite policy in its new southern steppe frontier zone after its annexation of Astrakhan and its strategies upon being challenged by the Ottoman Empire. More specifically, Muscovite strategies in the North Caucasus during and after the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569 and the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590 will be analyzed in depth, based on the primary sources, including archival documents and chronicles. In the North Caucasus, Muscovite officials applied the strategies that had previously enabled them to annex Kazan, Astrakhan, and control the Nogay Horde on their eastern and southern frontiers. This chapter will show outcomes that the steppe frontier strategies of Muscovy produced in the North Caucasus, considering the peculiarities of the region and changes in Ottoman northern policy in reaction to challenges in the North Caucasus, most of all Muscovite ambitions in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The Muscovites preferred to apply their well-developed steppe frontier strategies in the North Caucasus, which in the first decades of their active involvement seemed to bear fruit. In fact, Muscovite strategies and policy in the southern frontier were successful for Turkic peoples of the steppes such as the Nogays. However, this time the Muscovites were to operate in an area very close to the Ottoman lands and traditionally regarded as belonging to the Porte through the Crimean Khanate. Therefore, there was an imminent threat from the Ottoman Empire. A direct military intervention by the Muscovites would guarantee a similar

reaction by the Porte and its vassals the Crimean Khanate. This brought about an important component of the Muscovite policy in the North Caucasus, namely, avoidance of conflict with the Ottoman Empire. The Muscovite officials, especially in the first phases of their activities in the region, took extreme measures not to provoke the Ottoman Porte. They had from the beginning no desire to become involved in a direct conflict with the Ottomans in which a combined Ottoman-Crimean power might have put an end to Muscovy's expansionist ambitions and even reverse Muscovy's latest expansion along the Volga River. As soon as the Muscovite officials began their overtures toward the North Caucasus following Muscovy's annexation of Astrakhan in 1556, they started to search for ways to contain possible Ottoman and Crimean reactions to their expansion. Using centrifugal borderland forces was one of the options available to the Muscovites. That is why the Muscovite officials chose to utilize the Cossacks and Circassians in the first phase of their involvement in the North Caucasus. Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi and his alliance with the Circassians under the Muscovite tsar and their attacks on Ottoman and Crimean possessions was a result of this strategy. As we saw earlier, the Cossack and Circassian attacks in the late 1550s were of great concern to the Porte.

Although this was not the first time that the Ottoman or Crimean possessions around the Black Sea were attacked by Circassian tribes, the scale and success of these attacks and the fact that the Crimean Khanate was directly targeted was something new. By engaging the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans through the Cossacks and pro-Muscovite Circassians in the North Caucasus and in other parts of the Black Sea steppes, the Muscovites were able to concentrate their activities in the Kabardinian part of the North Caucasus, which until the end of the Vyshnevetskyi affair would be out of the reach of Crimean punitive power as we

understand from the Nikonian Chronicle. The chronicle reads, “Prince Dmitrei (Dmytro) said that he was a slave of the tsar and grand prince...and he went to fight against the Crimean *ulus* and took Islam-Kermen (i.e., Islam-Kerman)...From another side, Beshtav Circassians took two towns, Temrük and Taman.”¹

The Muscovites denied any involvement with the Cossacks of Vyshnevetskyi as they would deny their relations with the Don, Terek, and Zaporozhian Cossacks in the later decades and centuries. However, as this passage from the Nikonian chronicle shows, they actually supported and put Vyshnevetskyi's raids to good use as they proved to be a very effective tool for engaging the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars in their own backyard. Vyshnevetskyi's value was appreciated in Moscow and accordingly in 1560 he was sent by the tsar to the Circassians of the North Caucasus as an official Muscovite voevoda.²

Vyshnevetskyi's raids and his alliance with the Circassians plagued the Ottoman lands to the north of the Black Sea during the last years of the 1550s and in the early 1560s. On the other hand, the Ottoman/Crimean response to these raids was quick and effective. The Ottomans eventually managed to repel these attacks in the early years of the 1560s. Due to the successful Ottoman and Crimean response and Vyshnevetskyi's eventual decision in 1562 to return back to the service of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Muscovite influence in the Adyghe lands came to an end. We remind, it was these Adyghe Circassian chiefs who were the first ones to petition the tsar to be taken into Muscovite protection against the

¹ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (henceforth PSRL), *Lietopisnii sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarshei ili Nikonovskoi letopis* (St. Petersburg, 1904; Reprint, Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 13:275-77. (*A prikazal Kniaz' Dmitrei chto on kholop tsaria i velikogo kniazia...a poshel vovati Krymskykh ulusov i pod Islam-Kirmen'... a s druguiu storonu Cherkasy Pyatigorskie vziali dva goroda, Temriuk da Toman.*)

² PSRL, 13:324; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 8.

Crimean Tatars and Ottomans.³ However, the loss of influence in the Adyghe Circassian lands was not significant in terms of Muscovite objectives. By that time the Muscovites had already succeeded in realizing their main aim of creating a sphere of influence in Kabarda from which they would be able to control the Daryal Pass, approach the Georgian kings, and begin overtures towards gaining influence in the Daghestani lands.

Kabardinian Chief Temriuk had already accepted Muscovite suzerainty in 1557. Between 1557 and 1563, when the Ottoman and Crimean hands were full dealing with Cossack and Circassian attacks, the Kabarda had been, to a degree, pacified by Temriuk with Muscovite support.⁴ The Muscovite officials considered Temriuk “the grand prince of Kabarda” and through his allegiance they thought that the entire Kabardinian land was subdued to the tsar.⁵ However, from the Kabardinian point of view, Temriuk was one of the chiefs and his power in Kabarda was quite limited. His submission to Muscovy and Muscovite support he received immediately gained him enemies from other Kabardinian chiefs. These rival chiefs did not want to see Temriuk attain such a power that might have threatened their individual autonomy in Kabarda. Inescapably, there was an internal conflict among the chiefs and Temriuk’s rivals sought the support of the Crimean khan in their bid for power. The opposition to Temriuk was so strong that he had to leave Kabarda with his son and flee to Astrakhan.⁶ In the face of such a threat, the Muscovite tsar acted quickly and decisively. Temriuk received military support from Astrakhan in the form of musketeers

³ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 3.

⁴ PSRL, 13:371.

⁵ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 13.

⁶ PSRL, 13:370-71; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 11.

(*strel'tsy*) and Cossacks and almost a year later in 1563 managed to suppress most of his rivals in Kabarda.⁷ The policy makers in Moscow were determined to create a Muscovite sphere of influence in Kabarda. As for the rivals of Temriuk in Kabarda, there is no record of actual Crimean or Ottoman help for this anti-Muscovite group of chiefs. This was almost in the same year that the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars were successful at subduing the Adyghe Circassians including those living in the Beshtav region. Apparently by this time, the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars were in no position to interfere in the affairs of Kabarda as they were dealing with their own defense problems that had become apparent during the Cossack-Circassian attacks on their possessions in 1556-1562. Therefore, we can say that the very first phase of the Muscovite involvement in the North Caucasus resulted in that the Muscovites materialized their aim of dominating Kabardinian politics and co-opting some important Kabardinian chiefs.

The Ottoman-Crimean faction, on the other hand, was successful in the northwest and by 1565 the Adyghe lands were taken under the control of the Porte. Except for several minor uprisings of individual tribes, there were no major threats emanating from this region for the Porte or the Crimean Khanate. Such a division of sphere of influence in the North Caucasus between the Porte and Muscovy was essentially preferable to the Muscovite officials. In none of the Muscovite documents of the sixteenth century including their ambassadorial negotiations with the Porte, did the Muscovites renounce their rights over Kabarda. However, they did rather readily renounce their ties to the Adyghe Circassians. For example, in 1567, right after the construction of a Muscovite fortress on the Terek River, the Muscovite ambassador to the Crimean Khanate wrote to the tsar that the son of Temriuk,

⁷ PSRL, 13:370-71.

Mamstriuk, fought against “the Circassians of the Turks” and Besleneys, who served the sultan.⁸ We see that as early as 1567, the Adyghe lands were recognized as being under the Ottoman suzerainty. Moreover, in 1570 when Ivan Novosiltsev was in Istanbul as the envoy of Ivan IV to Selim II, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha asked him why the tsar had built fortresses on the Terek knowing that lands of the Circassians and Kumyks (the whole North Caucasus) belonged to the sultan. Novosiltsev in response said that the territory beyond the lands of the Besleneys, who serve the sultan, belonged to no one, but Temriuk, who was the father-in-law of the Muscovite tsar.⁹ It is clear from the Muscovite ambassador’s response that from the perspective of Muscovy the Besleneys and the Adyghe Circassians were under the sovereignty of the sultan. At the same time, it was implied by the envoy that the Muscovite presence in Kabarda should have been respected by the Ottoman Porte and that the tsar had no intention of renouncing his ties to Kabarda.

Muscovite strategies and construction of a fortress on the Terek River were a pressing challenge to the self-image and authority of the Ottoman Porte and of the Crimean khan in their borderlands. After its annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan, Muscovy was now eyeing the North Caucasus as a possible link to the Safavid Iran, Georgian kingdoms, and even India. That is why the Muscovite officials did not miss the opportunity to construct a fortress in the heart of the North Caucasus, where they could manipulate local rulers in the area and possibly start to apply more ably their steppe frontier strategies, i.e., co-optation, direct military involvement, construction of fortresses, imposing a pledge of allegiance (*shert*), taking of hostages (*amanat*), presents and annuities (*pominki* and *zhalovane*). The Muscovite

⁸ Ibid.; Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (henceforth RGADA), *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 40b- 43a, 50a-52b.

⁹ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 119a.

attempts at building fortresses in the North Caucasus and their methods of doing it shed light over several other components of Muscovite policy in the region.

3.1. “Under His Tsar’s Hand”: Muscovite “Ghost Fortresses” and Muscovite Ways of Defining Loyalties in the North Caucasus

As early as 1566 the Kabardinian *pshi* Temriuk petitioned the tsar for a fortress to be erected in Kabarda so that he could protect himself from the rival chiefs and from the *shamkhal*.¹⁰ As mentioned above, in 1563 his position and future in Kabarda was still in doubt and he had to leave Kabarda because of the pressure from his rivals led by Psheapshoko of the Kaytuks of Kabarda. He returned to Kabarda from Astrakhan with 500 *strel'tsy* and 500 Cossacks armed with firearms. Only with this Muscovite support of a thousand men, which was an important number in the sixteenth century in the North Caucasus, was Temriuk able to retake his own territories and drive his enemies out of Lesser Kabarda. By 1566, Temriuk had recently regained his position though his rivals remained powerful. While we learn about Temriuk’s petition for a fortress from Muscovite sources, there is no possibility of confirming it from the primary sources of the Ottomans or Crimeans. However, there is no reason to doubt that the proposal came from Temriuk if only for personal interests.

Construction of a fortress in Kabarda conformed to Muscovite policy in the southern frontiers and was very much desired by the Muscovite officials. It is generally accepted that the first Muscovite fortress was completed in 1566. However, already in 1563, Sibok of the Janeys, who first fled to Lithuania from the Muscovite service and then chose to serve the Crimean khan, reported to the khan that the Muscovites intended to erect a fortress in

¹⁰ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 13; PSRL, 13:405.

Kabarda.¹¹ Moreover, in the same year, a certain Kulgun Mirza said to the khan that a *voevoda* with a thousand *strel'tsy* came to Temriuk from the tsar and constructed him a “town” (fortress). Based on these, N. A. Smirnov claims that the fortress Sibok and Kulgun Mirza told about was the first Muscovite fortress built in 1563 in Kabarda.¹² That is before Temriuk officially requested a fortress from the tsar for his protection in 1566. However, it is not certain whether a fortress was actually built in 1563 or not. In addition to these, we understand from Devlet Girey’s letter to Ivan IV dated 1567—a year after the construction of the Terek fortress—that the Muscovites had a fort in the lands of the Circassians and in the lands of the *shamkhal*.¹³ We know that the fortress that was built in 1566 was definitely in Kabarda. Therefore, rather than a full-fledged fortress, the one that was built in 1563 might have actually been a blockhouse sort of structure (such as a redoubt) in Daghestan that would facilitate the Muscovite military help for Temriuk from Astrakhan in 1563 when Temriuk was trying to oust the anti-Muscovite party in Kabarda. Therefore, it can be claimed that there were two Muscovite fortified structures by 1567, one in Daghestan and one in Kabarda. What is for sure, however, is that Muscovite officials had been waiting for an opportunity to build a fortress in Kabarda. Yet, they had not done anything forcefully without receiving a petition from Temriuk. As it is understood from the chain of events, Temriuk saw the need for a continuous Muscovite support against his enemies in Kabarda as it was the very nature of the Kabardinian and other northern Caucasian societies where a dominant single ruler was not easily accepted.

¹¹ E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh svyazi s Rossiei: Vtoraiia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1963), 217.

¹² N. A. Smirnov, *Rossiiia i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv.*, Uchenye zapiski, vyp. 94 (Moscow: Izdetel'stvo Moskovskogo Gosudarsvennogo Universiteta, 1946), 91.

¹³ RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 71b-75a.

Temriuk and his family did receive the support they expected in those years. In fact, this made Temriuk and his family loyal vassals of the Muscovite tsar for generations. None of his sons ever tried to approach the Ottoman Porte or Crimean Khanate in their struggles for power in Kabarda. Another reason for such an allegiance on the part of the Temriuk family was that the Muscovites also used marriage strategy to cement their ties with the Kabardinians.

On June 15, 1561, Temriuk's daughter, Kuchenei, came to Moscow. By then, Tsar Ivan IV's first wife, Anastasia Romanovna, was dead. Tsar ordered that Kuchenei be brought to the palace, where "he saw her and loved."¹⁴ On July 6, she was baptized as Maria and on August 21, Tsar Ivan IV married her.¹⁵ Ivan IV's decision to strengthen the allegiance of Temriuk through marriage, which happened only four years after Temriuk's submission to Muscovy, also shows that the Kabardinians were main targets of the Muscovites.¹⁶

¹⁴ (*Togo zhe lieta iunია v 15 den', v nadeliu, priekhala k Moskve iz Pyatigorskikh cherkas Kabardinskogo kniazhe Temriukova Aidarovicha doch' kniazhna Kuchenei... Togo zhe mesiatsa Tsar' i Velikii Kniaz' Ivan Vasil'evich vsea Rusii kniazhe cherkaskoi velel byti na svoem dvore, smotrel ee i poliubil.*) PSRL, 13:333.

¹⁵ (*Togo zhe lieta avgusta v 21 den', na pamiat' sviatago apostola Faddeia, v chetverg, Tsar' i Velikii Kniaz' Ivan Vasil'evich vsea Rusii zhenilsia vtorym brakom, a vzial za sebia Kabartinskogo iz Cherkas Temriuka-kniazia Aidarovicha doch', narechennuiu vo sviatom kreshchenii tsarevnu Mariiu...*), Ibid., 333. Tsar's marriage with Kuchenei was mentioned by Antonio Possevino, who was Pope Gregory XIII's envoy to Ivan IV and spent the years 1581-1582 in Moscow. In his report, Possevino writes, "Contiguity and the common possession of the Greek rite have enabled the Prince of Muscovy to draw very close to the Circassians; he married to the daughter of one of their chief men, although she later died." Antonio Possevino, *The Moscovia of Antonio Possevino*, trans. with critical introduction and notes by Hugh F. Graham (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1977), 2. Interestingly, tsar's marriage with Kuchenei must have made Possevino think that the Circassians (Kabardinians) were Orthodox Christians. In fact, as it may be remembered, Temriuk and most of his family were Muslims.

¹⁶ Another interesting point to note regarding this marriage and Temriuk's personal relations with Ivan IV is that considering that Temriuk and his family were Muslims, the baptism of his daughter and one of his sons (Mikhail) in Moscow shows how superficial the religious affiliations of the North Caucasian chiefs were. In fact, conversion of Muslim elites to Christianity is a rather rare phenomenon in Islamic history yet there are several examples of this in the history of the North Caucasus and more among the Turkic nobility of the Golden Horde.

The Nikonian Chronicle records in 1566 that “they petitioned the Sovereign Tsar and Great Kniaz on behalf of his father (in-law) Temriuk-Kniaz that the Sovereign order building of a fortress at the mouth of the Sunzha River on the Terek for the for protection of Temriuk from his enemies.”¹⁷ We understand from the chronicle that in spite of being defeated in 1563 by Temriuk, his rivals, especially the Kaytuk family (led by Aslanbek and Psheapshoko), were still active and powerful. The Muscovite tsar immediately granted the order and in February 1567 sent necessary equipment and many men to Kabarda to build a fortress. In his letter to the Polish king, the Crimean khan described the situation by saying that the grand prince of Muscovy “sent many people to his father-in-law to build fortress on the Terek.”¹⁸ The construction of this fortress triggered an Ottoman-Crimean reaction in the region. It is true that the annexation of Astrakhan was a shock to the Porte and recovery of it was on the agenda of the Ottomans. However, it was not a priority until Muscovy made its true intentions clear by erecting a fortress on the Terek River and thus made a move to control this important and strategic part of the North Caucasus that the Ottomans considered this a priority.

That is why as soon as the Muscovite fortress was completed, the Crimean Tatars raided Kabardinian lands to punish those who defected.¹⁹ However, this raid and threats from the khan or the sultan did not yield the desired result—fortress remained and the Muscovite influence in Kabarda continued to increase. The fortress and the presence of Muscovite

¹⁷ (...biti chelom gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziiu ot ottsa svoego Temriuka-kniazia Aidarovicha, chtoby gosudar' pozhaloval dlia berezhenia ot nedrugov ego velel gorod na Terke ust'Siuiunchi reki postaviti.) PSRL, 13:405.

¹⁸ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 15-16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

strel'tsy and Cossacks were unquestionable indications of Muscovite dominance in Kabarda. This is also a good example of, when the situation allowed it, active Muscovite involvement on, even beyond, its southern frontier. By using his own military power rather than relying on his clients, the Muscovite tsar gained strength and prestige and thus influence in the region. Thanks to the Muscovite support, Temriuk's authority in 1567 spread to the Daghestani lands as well.²⁰ At one point, Temriuk with Muscovite help succeeded in capturing some lands around Tarku, very close to the capital of the *shamkhalat*.²¹ In the correspondence between the Crimean khan and the Muscovite tsar there were discussions about the Muscovite-Kabardinian involvement in the lands of the *shamkhal*. The khan asked the tsar not to interfere in the lands of the *shamkhal*, which was under the khan's suzerainty.²² There was also an attempt to pacify Kabarda and expel the Muscovites in 1567 by Crimean Khan Devlet Girey. However, the Crimean attack at this time failed to force the Muscovite forces out of Kabarda or to end Temriuk's power.²³ While preferring to use their military to actively support their vassals, as is well known, the Muscovites avoided direct conflict with the Ottomans at all costs. They used a clever multi-layered strategy in which they co-opted Temriuk and made most of the Lesser Kabardinian chiefs their clients in the heart of the North Caucasus by establishing family ties with Temriuk and providing him with direct military help. Then they used their Kabardinian clients to penetrate into the lands of the *shamkhal* rather than sending their own troops. By using the Kabardinians and Cossacks, the

²⁰ Ibid., 15-16; RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 71b-75a.

²¹ M. Sadık Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Eren, 2005), 52.

²² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 14.

²³ Ibid., 15-16.

Muscovites were in a position to deny any active involvement in the Daghestani affairs if faced with threats from the Ottomans, so they could avoid a direct conflict with the Porte.

The Muscovite activities in the North Caucasus, inability of the Crimean Tatars to expel them from the region as well as some religious, commercial, and strategic reasons led to the Astrakhan Campaign of 1569, a mere two years after the construction of the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda. It was a delicate situation for those Kabardinian chiefs who sided with Muscovy. The Ottoman army, which could have ended the Muscovite presence in the North Caucasus if it had directly targeted Kabarda, reached Astrakhan in the fall of 1569. The pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs followed a wait-and-see policy. However, when the Ottoman army failed to take Astrakhan and ended up in a less than organized retreat across the North Caucasus steppes, these Kabardinian chiefs inflicted serious losses on the Ottoman army in addition to the losses to hunger, cold, and fatigue on the wintery steppe.²⁴

The failure of the Astrakhan campaign notwithstanding, the Muscovites considered direct Ottoman political involvement and military actions in the southern steppe frontier zone a grave threat to their interests in the region. They were likely apprehensive that the Ottomans could eventually take Astrakhan and manipulate the Nogays who had been co-opted by Muscovy. One can even surmise that they may even have been apprehensive about a likely direct or indirect threat Ottoman to their recent acquisition of Kazan. Considering such possible repercussions should Muscovy continue to disturb the balance of power in the region, the tsar chose not to provoke the Porte and avoid a direct conflict with the Ottomans. In 1570, Ivan IV sent his envoy Ivan Novosiltsev to probe opinions of the officials in the

²⁴ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 114.

Porte and to appease the sultan so that he would not organize another campaign in the north against Muscovy. Novosiltsev tried to justify the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda based on the marriage of Ivan IV with Temriuk's daughter and as a case of voluntary submission of the Kabardinian chiefs to the Muscovite tsar.²⁵ As the text of Novosiltsev's report shows, the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda was the major point of contention between him and Ottoman officials. Compared to this issue, the status of Astrakhan and Kazan was hardly a topic of negotiation.²⁶

In his letter to the Muscovite tsar, the two main demands of the Ottoman sultan were the demolishment of the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda and opening of the Astrakhan route for Muslim pilgrims from Central Asia.²⁷ This clearly shows that the destruction of the Muscovite fortress was the highest priority for the Porte. The Porte might have been aware of the Muscovite policy of first establishing fortresses and then directly ruling an area or people in the steppe frontier, and now this was happening in a strategic area and rich in potential slaves that the Crimean khan and the Porte had considered to be under their sovereignty. For this reason, the Ottomans by all means rejected the argument of the Muscovite envoy in 1570 that the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda was legitimate due to the tsar's marriage with Temriuk's daughter and Temriuk's voluntary submission, and unwaveringly demanded its demolishment.

²⁵ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 118a-118b; *Puteshestviia russkikh poslov XVI-XVII vv.: Stateinye spiski*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1954), 90.

²⁶ Ibid., fol. 118a-118b; *Puteshestviia russkikh poslov*, 89-91.

²⁷ Ibid., fol. 56b-59a. See Appendix II-A for the original Muscovite translation of the letter.

Meanwhile, the Porte unleashed the Crimean Tatars in the North Caucasus. The Crimean Tatars raided the Kabardinian lands extensively in 1570 and inflicted a fatal blow to the pro-Muscovite party in a series of battles in Kabarda. Temriuk himself was heavily wounded and his two sons were captured and taken to Crimea by Adil Girey who commanded the Crimean army.²⁸ Compared to the previous Crimean punitive raid that was in 1567 when the pro-Muscovite party suffered but survived, the 1570 raid was most effective as a punishment both for the Muscovite orientation of Kabarda and for Kabardinian attacks on the returning Ottoman soldiers from Astrakhan in 1569. Muscovite records indicate that the campaign was undertaken upon the request of Aslanbek (Arslan Bey in the Ottoman documents) and Psheapshoko of the Kaytuks, who were rivals of Temriuk.²⁹ It is understood from these records that Aslanbek's pro-Crimean and pro-Ottoman orientation dated back to the early 1560s when he and his allies started to fight against the rising power of Temriuk in 1562-3.³⁰ The Crimean Tatars were guided in 1570 by a certain Gazi Mirza mentioned in the Ottoman sources (Kazy Murza in Muscovite sources and sometimes Kordanuk in Ottoman sources), who was also an influential chief in Kabarda. This Crimean campaign was better organized and instrumental for putting an end to the power of Muscovy in Kabarda for a while.³¹ In the same year or in 1571, Temriuk died of his wounds. Meanwhile, Muscovy used diplomacy and managed to arrange the release and safe return of

²⁸ RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 284a-285b.

²⁹ Ibid., fol. 275b, 278b, 283b; Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 253.

³⁰ Aslanbek was one of the prominent Kabardinian chiefs who served the Ottomans in their war against the Safavids. Asafi Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca 'atname*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2006), 379.

³¹ Devlet Girey's apprehensions about a possible Ottoman take-over of Astrakhan, a city that was an important part of the Golden Horde, are well-known. This could be the reason for the surprising and very effective success of the 1570 Crimean raid in Kabarda, compared to the earlier raids. Devlet Girey might have thought that if the Crimeans were to expel the Muscovites from Kabarda, the Ottomans would shelve their plans to annex Astrakhan and allow a return to the status quo ante, again leaving the northern affairs to the Crimeans.

Mamstriuk, Temriuk's son, from Crimea. Thereafter Mamstriuk became the head of his immediate family and the staunchest supporter of Muscovite interests in Kabarda.³² So, in 1571 the Muscovite sphere of influence in Kabarda was gravely damaged, but not totally eliminated.

Moreover, Crimean Khan Devlet Girey in 1571 raided Muscovy, even managing to burn the suburbs of Moscow forcing the tsar to flee the capital. These two events and the possibility of another campaign by the Porte convinced Ivan IV to fulfill the demands of the Ottoman Porte. The Muscovite tsar in his letter to Selim II dated 8 April 1571 wrote, "out of our love and friendship for our brother [the Ottoman sultan] we ordered the fortress on the Terek be demolished." The tsar also ensured the sultan that the pilgrimage route through Astrakhan would not be blocked.³³ Although the tsar promised to order the demolition of the fortress in Kabarda, it is, however, not clear whether the fortress was actually taken down because time and again throughout the last quarter of the sixteenth century at opportune moments, fortresses seemed to pop up in the same location. What is rather certain is that the Muscovite troops stationed in the fortress were withdrawn to Astrakhan.³⁴

Although the pro-Muscovite party lived on with the family of Temriuk, they lost their influence in Kabarda and began bidding their time. After his death, Temriuk was replaced by his brother, Kanbulat, as the *pshihua*, who was probably trusted by the Crimeans. The Muscovites seem to have had no say in his election and Kanbulat was elected only by the Kabardinian gentry. Due to the presence of the Crimean forces at their doorstep and with the

³² RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 348a; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 26-27.

³³ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 175a-176b.

³⁴ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 122.

demise of Temriuk, Kanbulat initially resolved to revive the old Kabardinian-Crimean pattern of relations rather than approaching Muscovy.³⁵ Thus, the old Kabardinian-Crimean pattern of relationship, this time with an active Ottoman involvement, began to dominate the Kabardinian part of the North Caucasus after 1570. It should be remembered, however, that Kanbulat did not seek Ottoman protection. As such, Muscovite presence in Kabarda in the form of *strel'tsy* and Cossacks came to an end in 1571 and the Crimean-backed Kabardinian chiefs controlled the area for almost a decade thereafter.

3.2. Out of the Ashes, Tsar's Prestige Born Again: Revival of Muscovite Power in Kabarda

Following the events of 1571, the second chance for Muscovy to re-gain its position in Kabarda came at a very crucial time. The year was 1577 when Kanbulat, who had worked with the pro-Crimean party in Kabarda in the early 1570s and then had probably been neutral to foreign powers, decided to try his chances in Moscow again. It was a time when the Ottomans were in the planning process of their campaign against the Safavids in which they would try to establish their hegemony over the North Caucasus as well in addition to their objectives in the South Caucasus. Soviet historians and western historians who use solely the Russian sources attribute Kanbulat's rapprochement with Muscovy to the possibility of Ottoman domination of the North Caucasus and Kanbulat's eagerness to protect Kabardinian independence.³⁶

³⁵ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennii iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov, (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 8-9.

³⁶ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 122; Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 258, 259; Walter Richmond, *The Northwest Caucasus: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

However, the internal dynamics of Kabardinian politics would be a better explanation for Kanbulat's petition as it had been the case for Temriuk. First, the Kabardinian chiefs had already experienced and probably knew by that time that Muscovy would not confront the Ottoman Porte as an enemy although it would definitely help the Kabardinians against the Crimean Tatars. Therefore, there is no basis to suppose that Kanbulat approached Muscovy to prevent an Ottoman military invasion or domination of his lands. Second, we know that the Ottomans designated one of the Kabardinian chiefs, Mehmed, as the *sancakbey* (governor) of Kabarda and courted several others in the 1570s.³⁷ They were supporting the Kabardinian chiefs that sided with them, which affected the balance of power among the gentry in Kabarda. Although Kanbulat was officially the *pshihua* of Kabarda, he did not have any real power. Moreover, obviously the Ottomans did not recognize his title when they appointed the afore-mentioned Mehmed as the governor of Kabarda. In addition to these, after their raid in 1570, the Crimeans most probably supported the Kaytuk family (Aslanbek and Psheapshoko) who had been their allies in Kabarda. Therefore, Kanbulat was in a vulnerable and desperate situation and the Muscovite tsar was the only source that would be interested in helping him regain his power in Kabarda. Just as Temriuk's rivals sought help from the Crimean khan and the Porte against the rising power of Temriuk in 1560s, this time rivals of the Ottoman-supported Kabardinian chiefs thought that they could receive some support in their struggle for power from the Muscovite tsar, who had shown interest in the affairs of Kabarda since the 1560s.

Kanbulat was also encouraged and assisted in his dealings with Muscovy by his nephew, Mamstriuk, who was saved from the Crimeans by the Muscovite tsar and remained

³⁷ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri mühimme defteri* (henceforth MD) 23, no. 130.

loyal to the tsar as we understand from Ivan IV's letter to the latter dated 1578 following the visit of Kanbulat and some other Kabardinian chiefs to Moscow. It was during this visit that Kanbulat petitioned the tsar to be taken "under his tsar's hand," protected from his enemies, and for construction of a fortress at the estuary of the Sunzha River.³⁸ The tsar granted Kanbulat's wishes and Kanbulat took the pledge of allegiance. In addition to their long-term goals of dominating the North Caucasus, submission of the Kabardinian chiefs would serve the Muscovites in two ways in the short-term. First, they would be able to control through a client a very strategic area before the Ottoman-Safavid war. Second, they planned to receive auxiliary forces from the Kabardinians to be used in their wars on their western borders. For this reason, in his letter to Mamstriuk, the Muscovite tsar, Ivan IV, demanded from Mamstriuk that he send three hundred men to join the Muscovite army.³⁹

As already stated, in 1578 Kanbulat also petitioned the Muscovite tsar for reconstruction of the Muscovite fortress on the Terek. The tsar gladly accepted the proposal knowing that the Ottoman offensive against the Safavid Iran would intensify Crimean and Ottoman activity in the North Caucasus. A fortress in Kabarda would be very strategic in terms of containing a possible further Ottoman expansion toward the north, i.e., Astrakhan in case the Ottomans wrested the South Caucasus from the Safavids. In the same year, Luka Novosiltsev was sent with many men and weapons to the bank of the Terek River and built a fortress there.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁴⁰ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 259; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35.

At this very critical time for the Porte, Muscovy succeeded in controlling a fortress in the heart of the North Caucasus with which it could hinder the Ottoman supply route that passed through Kabarda—this it actually did as early as its foundation date in 1578. When Adil Girey of the Crimea was en route with the Crimean troops to Shirvan in order to join the main Ottoman army against the Safavids, according to the Muscovite sources, he found the fortress on his route. Adil Girey had to ask permission of Luka Novosiltsev, the voevoda of the Muscovite forces in Kabarda, for passage through this portion of the Terek region. Novosiltsev allowed Adil Girey to pass through.⁴¹ Two things are important to note here. First, the Crimean troops did not try or were not able to capture the fortress in spite of their number. Therefore, this was not just a redoubt but a properly manned and equipped fortress. Second, the Muscovites allowed the Crimean Tatar army to pass, which shows that they still did not want to get into a conflict with the Ottoman Porte.

However, even the existence there of a Muscovite fortress was a serious threat to the strategic and military plans of the Ottoman Porte and of the Crimean khan. It was something that the Ottomans could not ignore even though the Muscovites were friendly and cooperated with the Ottomans/Crimeans. In 1579, Crimean khan Mehmed Girey asked the tsar to demolish the fortress again.⁴² Due to the Porte's military presence in the Caucasus and the pressure from the Crimean khan, the tsar once again in 1580 decided to order the demolition of the fortress on the Terek.⁴³ However, this time the pro-Muscovite party remained strong in

⁴¹ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 259; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 46-47.

⁴² RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 254a-258a.

⁴³ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 260.

Kabarda, although not strong enough to control all of the Kabardinian lands as they almost had done during Temriuk's rule between 1563 and 1570.

Kanbulat, the *pshihua* of Kabarda, remained loyal to the Muscovite tsar along with Mamstriuk and some other Kabardinian chiefs after 1578. There were exchanges of envoys and lively relations between these chiefs and the Muscovite court, which would bore its fruits in the late 1580s. Again, for the time being, that is, in 1578-1580, the Muscovites preferred to follow their strategy of avoidance of a direct conflict with the Porte while strengthening their position in Kabarda. From 1580 to 1588, the Muscovites operated in the area by utilizing the Cossacks settled along the Terek River, i.e., the Greben and Terek Cossacks, though of course all along claiming to have no relations with the Cossacks and their activities. It was a delicate situation for Muscovy. On the one hand they were avoiding a direct conflict with the Ottomans. On the other hand, a possible Ottoman dominance in the North Caucasus would be very detrimental to their expansion and even existence in their southern frontier. It could even reverse their annexation of Astrakhan and could attract the Nogays to the Porte, creating severe problems for Muscovy.

With the help of the Cossacks and by sending Muscovite *strel'tsy* to Kabarda during the winters to protect their allies against the powerful pro-Ottoman/Crimean party which by that time included very prominent Kabardinian chiefs, the Muscovites managed to support their vassals in the region. They also waged an indirect war against the Ottomans and Crimeans through the Cossacks who several times attacked the Ottoman supply lines that passed through Kabarda and the Terek River. By the early 1580s the Ottomans, to an extent, managed to consolidate their territorial gains in the Caucasus including Shirvan and Derbend and also subdue the rebellious tribes and polities in Daghestan thanks to the efforts of

Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha. Upon emergence of succession problems in the Crimea, mostly because of the Ottoman plan to depose Mehmed Girey II and replace him with İslam Girey, Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha was ordered to help the latter in his bid for the Crimean throne. In 1583 Osman Pasha departed from Derbend and used the North Caucasus route to Kefe. Osman Pasha and his company were attacked by the Cossacks who were lying in ambush surprising the Ottomans with their musket fire at a place very close to the confluence of the rivers of Sunzha and Terek. This area would later be known as “the Ottoman Road” in the local languages and in the Muscovite sources (*Osmanovskii Shliakh*).⁴⁴ The battle continued for days and eventually Cossacks were able to escape after inflicting serious harm on the Ottomans. The Ottomans lost many men and much materiel during this encounter.⁴⁵ It was not the first instance of a Cossack attack, although this was the most daring one since they targeted Osman Pasha and Ottoman soldiers traveling with him. Before this incident and again in 1583, two officers (*çavuş*) from the Porte who were going to relay an order to Osman Pasha in Derbend from the Porte through Kefe and North Caucasus route along the Terek were captured by the same Cossacks.⁴⁶ As it would be a usual pattern in the seventeenth century—the Muscovite tsar renounced any connection with the activities of those “fugitive and lawless Cossacks” operating along the Terek and ensured the Ottoman sultan of his intention to pursue peaceful and brotherly relations with the Porte.⁴⁷ Thus, as understood from the Muscovite and Ottoman sources, Cossack raids were a serious problem

⁴⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 147; *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589-1605)*, ed. W. D. Allen, texts trans. Anthony Mango (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), 292-93.

⁴⁵ Asafi Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, 377-78.

⁴⁶ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 248b-249a; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 35.

⁴⁷ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 416a.

in the 1580s for the Ottoman armies and messengers using the North Caucasus route. This shows how effectively Muscovite officials and agents utilized the Cossacks in the region from the very beginning of their adventure in the North Caucasus that started in the late 1550s.

Apart from the Cossack problem, in the second half of the 1580s the Ottomans were having difficulty in terms of cementing their dominance in the North Caucasus. Being of Kabardinian origin and even having relatives among the strong Kabardinian chiefs of the period, Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha was a statesman who understood the intricacies of the North Caucasus very well and strengthened Ottoman dominance over Daghestan in a very short time. He also employed people of Circassian origin in his retinue. However, Osman Pasha left the region in 1583. In addition to his absence from the region from then on, the Crimean succession crisis including the issue of fugitive *hanzades* became an important problem. Mehmed Girey's sons, Sefa, Saadet and Murad fled the Crimea upon the installation of İslam Girey on the Crimean throne by the Porte. Sefa Girey went to the Janey Circassians with whom he had an *atalık* connection. Saadet Girey found allies among the Nogays while Murad Girey preferred to try his chances in Moscow.⁴⁸ These three fugitive Gireys threatened the new Crimean khan and, in his person, the Ottoman dominance over the Crimean Khanate. The existence of a Crimean Girey prince in Moscow struggling for the Crimean throne or among the Nogays who were allies of Muscovy once again put the Muscovite tsar in the focus of the Ottoman Porte. As for the Muscovite policymakers, this offered an opportunity to pursue a complicated policy of establishing a broader sphere of

⁴⁸ Ibid., fol. 291b. Murad Girey first took refuge in Astrakhan and was quickly summoned by the tsar to Moscow. Saadet Girey was married to a Nogay princess that is why he preferred to go to the Greater Nogays.

influence in the North Caucasus, this time including Daghestan, by using the Chinggisid persona of Murad Girey.

A Chinggisid fugitive supported by Muscovy created mixed feelings in the North Caucasus. In 1586, the tsar and Murad Girey received envoys from the Daghestani *shamkhal* and from his son. The *shamkhal* and his son promised to serve Murad Girey in his struggle for power.⁴⁹ By the same year, Murad Girey managed to receive the support of the *shamkhal*, the ruler of Tümen and some other Daghestani rulers, the Great Nogays, and even Alexander II of Kakheti.⁵⁰ Again in the same year, the tsar sent Murad Girey to Astrakhan so that he could organize his activities against the Ottoman/Crimean axis with the local rulers of the North Caucasus. The Muscovite officials hoped that Murad Girey's presence would help them establish their long-desired aim of creating a sphere of influence over Daghestani policies, which had traditionally sided with the Ottomans by then. In fact, it did work out as the Muscovites had planned at least in the first years of Murad Girey's coming to Astrakhan. The alliance was cemented with the marriage of Murad Girey with a daughter of the *shamkhal*.⁵¹ However, what brought an end to the alliance of Muscovy, Murad Girey, Daghestani rulers, and the king of Kakheti was something that the Muscovites did not and could not calculate. In 1588 the Crimean Khan İslam Girey died and was replaced by Gazi Girey II, who was respected and accepted by the fugitive Gireys as he choose to reconcile with them by issuing an amnesty and appointing Sefa Girey as the *nureddin* (second in line to

⁴⁹ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 263.

⁵⁰ Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London: C. Hurst, 1992), 39.

⁵¹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 168, 174.

succession to the Crimean throne).⁵² Upon this, Murad Girey wrote a letter to the new Crimean khan and asked to be pardoned. The new khan relayed Murad Girey's request to the sultan, saying that Murad Girey was now willing to submit to the Porte.⁵³ An imperial order in which the Porte recognized his submission was sent to the Crimean khan so that he would forward it to Murad Girey.⁵⁴ These new developments prevented the Muscovite plans from materializing and eventually, Murad Girey died in 1590, most probably due to poison administered by the Muscovites.⁵⁵

While they were trying to forge alliances against the Ottomans and their vassals in the North and South Caucasus, the Muscovites always sought opportunities to build new fortresses in the region. In 1586, the Muscovite tsar was informed by the voevoda of Astrakhan that the Ottomans had been planning to construct several fortresses on the Terek,⁵⁶ which can in fact be confirmed by the Ottoman sources. In 1585, an order was sent to Cafer Pasha in which he was asked to investigate the possibility and benefits of a fortress on the Terek in Kabarda in order to secure the Ottoman presence in the North Caucasus and the supply route that went through it.⁵⁷ This also indicates how skilful Muscovy was in gathering information. Moreover, in the late 1580s, the possibility of an Ottoman campaign to take Astrakhan in order to pre-empt the threat originating from there due to the activities of

⁵² Carl Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 101-2.

⁵³ MD 64, no. 232.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 39.

⁵⁶ Smirnov, *Rossia i Turtsiia*, 138.

⁵⁷ MD 60, no. 271.

Murad Girey and of the Cossacks supported by the Muscovites through Astrakhan was very likely. Discussions at the Porte and the correspondence related to a possible campaign to take Astrakhan could not go unnoticed by the Muscovite agents in the area.

Due to this threat, the Muscovites did what they had done best in the steppe frontier zones: construction of new fortresses in strategic but hard to reach locations where Cossacks and *strel'tsy* could be stationed. In line with this, Terskii gorod (Terek Town) was constructed in 1588. However, in order to avoid the fate of other Muscovite fortresses built in the North Caucasus, this time the fortress was built at the mouth of the Terek River, a place which was relatively far away from the Ottoman and Crimean operations and supply route in the North Caucasus. Meanwhile, the walls of Astrakhan were strengthened with stones.⁵⁸ Moreover, in 1589 the Muscovites erected another fortress named Tsaritsin between the rivers of Don and Volga, exactly in the same place where the Ottomans had tried to dig a canal in 1569.⁵⁹ This was probably a pre-emptive move, in case the Ottoman Porte revived their old plans of digging a canal there. With the construction of these fortresses, the Muscovites were to have a line of defense before the city of Astrakhan against the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars. Terek Town was to become the main centre of operations after 1590.⁶⁰ Astrakhan was still important and remained the centre for the steppe frontier zone and for containing the Nogays and, later, the Kalmyks. The role of Terek for the Muscovites was similar to that of Azak for the Ottoman Porte.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 270.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 269; Smirnov, *Rossiia i Turtsiia*, 141.

⁶⁰ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 284; Smirnov, *Rossiia i Turtsiia*, 138.

⁶¹ See Alan Fisher, "Azov in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 21 (1973): 202-17.

The situation in Kabarda would undergo another change in 1588—the same year as the construction of the Terek fortress. Mamstriuk and Kanbulat's son, Kudenek, came to Moscow as envoys from Kabarda in 1588. In accordance with the Muscovite records, Mamstriuk and Kudenek represented the *pshihua* of Kabarda (Kanbulat), all Kabardinian chiefs, and the whole Kabardinian land. They petitioned the tsar to be taken “under his tsar's hand,” to be protected from the Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars, and for the construction of another fortress on the Terek River, in Kabarda.⁶² The Tsar granted their wishes as usual. He also gave Mamstriuk and Kudenek their annuities (*zhalovanie*). Mamstriuk received 50 rubles, sable and a fur coat; and Kudenek received 30 rubles and a fur coat.⁶³

They brought the *gramota* from the tsar along with annuity for Kanbulat. The *gramota* summarized Kanbulat's and other Kabardinian chiefs' duties toward the Muscovite tsar and his representatives in Terek and Astrakhan.⁶⁴ At this point, it should be remembered that the tsar paid Mamstriuk his annual salary even in 1570 and 1571 when he was a prisoner in Crimea.⁶⁵ Similarly, when Kanbulat returned from Moscow in 1578, Mamstriuk was sent his salary with him along with a *gramota*.⁶⁶ These examples show how important *zhalovanie* (annuity) and *pominki* (gifts) were in the strategy of Muscovy in its dealings with the local rulers and how cleverly it they used to secure their allegiance to the tsar. Mamstriuk is a very good example of continued local loyalty to the Muscovite tsar and how the Muscovite policy

⁶² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 49-50.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

⁶⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 48-51; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 29

⁶⁵ RGADA, *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 292b-293a. *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 27.

⁶⁶ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 8-9; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35.

functioned in spite of interventions by the Ottoman Porte, Crimean Khanate, and Daghestani *shamkhal*.

As the representatives of Kabardinian *pshihua* Kanbulat, all Kabardinian chiefs, and the whole Kabardinian land, Mamstriuk and Kudenek made the *shert'* (pledge of allegiance) in 1588 in Moscow.⁶⁷ It should be remembered at this point they in fact did not represent the whole of Kabarda due to its peculiar political structure, which has been explained earlier. This *shert'* offers important clues regarding the Muscovite influence at the end of the 1580s. First, by 1588 the Muscovites seem to have grasped the social hierarchy of the Kabardinians and obviously correctly distinguished between *pshis* and *mirzas* (*murzas*). To illustrate, since the death of his father Temriuk, Mamstriuk was a prince (*pshi*), yet Kudenek was only a *mirza* as his father, Kanbulat, was the *pshi* of his clan and the *pshihua* of Kabarda. However, the Muscovite diplomatic language used in this text also indicates that the Muscovites still ignored the nature of Kabardinian politics. Although Kanbulat was the *pshihua* of the whole Kabarda, as it has been stressed many times throughout this dissertation, his title predicated no actual power in the politics of Kabarda. He had no right to order other Kabardinian *pshis*, namely he had no right to say that the whole Kabardinian land had submitted to the Muscovite tsar as this document implies. In fact, many Kabardinian rulers were allies of the Porte and Crimean Khanate as this Muscovite document mentions. These *pshis* and *mirzas* who allied with the Porte and Crimea were in fact quite powerful and influential personages in Kabarda as we will see below. Aslanbek, for example, who was in the Ottoman/Crimean camp, became the next *pshihua* after Kanbulat. Although the document clearly shows that the whole Kabardinian land was not submitted, it was claimed and accepted by Mamstriuk,

⁶⁷ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 50-51.

Kanbulat, and the Muscovite policymakers that the whole Kabardinian land was indeed “under his tsar’s hand.” However, such sort of line of reasoning was not unique to the Muscovite officials, the Ottomans also considered, for example, the whole of Kabarda as being under their sovereignty. As seen above, Mehmed of Kabarda, who had visited Istanbul, was appointed by the Porte as the *sancakbey* (governor) of all of Kabarda in 1573.⁶⁸ Both imperial powers saw their positions in the North Caucasus through their own lenses.

Second, the *shert*’ stipulates that the Kabardinians were to help the voevoda of Terek and Astrakhan in case “Turks or Crimeans” attacked “the sovereign’s patrimony of Astrakhan.” Therefore, it can be said that the Muscovites were expecting an Ottoman or Crimean attack on Astrakhan and Terek in these years. We know that in 1587 the Porte was, in fact, planning a campaign for Astrakhan, for which letters were sent to the Crimean Khanate, Urus Bey of the Greater Nogays and Piyale Pasha.⁶⁹ The Muscovites must have learned about the plans of the Porte. As such, this time they were trying to make sure that they would receive the support of Kabardinian chiefs in their defense of Terek and Astrakhan. Therefore, apart from controlling the North Caucasus, one of the considerations in constructing the fortress of Terek, which was built in 1588, must have been that it would be at the front line of defense in case of an Ottoman/Crimean attack on Astrakhan.

The *shert*’ also mentions military services to be performed by the vassal Kabardinian chiefs. One of the conditions of the *shert*’ was that the Kabardinians would help the tsar’s armies in the western border of Muscovy if the Muscovite tsar required such services. This was not the first time the Muscovy demanded men from its clients. As was seen above, in

⁶⁸ MD 23, no. 130.

⁶⁹ MD 62, nos. 226, 230, 231.

1578 the tsar ordered Mamstriuk to send men to the western front of Muscovy against Lithuania and Sweden.⁷⁰ Muscovy also received military support from the Greater Nogays on its western front.⁷¹ Moreover, in July 1589, the Muscovite tsar ordered the voevoda of Astrakhan that he should send men from the Circassians to be used on the western front against the Swedes.⁷² Letters relaying the same message were also forwarded to Mamstriuk and Solokh in which the tsar demanded their military services.⁷³ In fact, such demands by imperial powers were common on all sides. As already noted, the Ottoman Porte also sent orders to the Circassian chiefs asking them to join the Ottoman war effort against Safavid Iran by mustering and sending their armies along with the Crimean or Ottoman army.⁷⁴

Lastly, we see that in 1588 the Muscovite sphere of influence was limited to the part of Kabarda around the Terek River. The Ottomans, Crimean Tatars, and Kumyks (*shamkhal*) were main enemies with whom the vassal Kabardinian chiefs were not to communicate in accordance with their *shert'*. Mountain princes (Avars) and the Tümen principality along the Tümen River in Daghestan were not allied with Muscovy at this time. However, in spite of these conditions in the *shert'*, we know that pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs communicated with the Ottomans, Crimeans, or the *shamkhal*. Therefore, the Muscovite influence in the North Caucasus was still very ephemeral. For example, even though he was a staunch Muscovite ally, Mamstriuk allowed an Ottoman *çavuş* to stay in his *kabak* and

⁷⁰ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 34-35.

⁷¹ V. V. Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2002), 610.

⁷² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 60-61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 60-63.

⁷⁴ MD 32, nos. 313, 318.

guided him through Kabarda on his way to Derbend in 1589.⁷⁵ Of course this act was, in fact, a breach of his *shert'* with the Muscovites. Later, he explained to the tsar's envoys that it was their custom to host and guide any traveler regardless of who they were.⁷⁶ Although there were reports that he did not let the Cossacks staying in his *kabak* as representatives of the Muscovite tsar and the voevoda of Terek go to Terek Town and alert the voevoda about the stay of the Ottoman *çavuş*, he claimed in front of the Muscovite envoys that he actually sent the Cossacks but it was already too late for the alert to be of any use.⁷⁷

This was the situation in Kabarda in 1588 at the onset of the end of the Ottoman-Safavid war. With Terek becoming their stronghold and their influence in Kabarda on the rise, the Muscovites once again began to use their armies directly in subduing the local rulers to the tsar. Another reason that emboldened Muscovy in these years were offers of alliances against the Ottoman Empire in the east by the Safavids and in the west by the Habsburgs and the Papacy. Direct Muscovite military intervention gradually altered the situation in Kabarda and in the North Caucasus and eventually encouraged the Muscovites to take bolder steps in their quest for hegemony in the North Caucasus. In a Posol'skii Prikaz *gramota* addressed to the voevoda of Terek, Andrei Khvorostinin, in August 1588, the voevoda was informed that Kanbulat, Mamstriuk, Kudenek, and their brothers were now on the tsar's payroll and serving him. The letter also explained the conditions of the *shert'* that Mamstriuk and Kudenek signed in July 1588 and named the Kabardinian chiefs who did not want to be "under his tsar's hand" and "receive the tsar's annuity." Khvorostinin was asked to send *strel'tsy* and

⁷⁵ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 137.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-41.

Cossacks to subdue them. The loyal Kabardinian chiefs were also ordered to help the voevoda against Prince Solokh, Prince Tapshyuk, pro-Ottoman/Crimean chiefs in Kabarda.⁷⁸

The existence of the fortress of Terek, this time stronger than other Muscovite fortresses that had been built along the Terek earlier, noticeably changed the balance in Kabardinian politics and in the North Caucasus in general. To illustrate, in February 1589 Prince Solokh, who served the Porte and Crimean Khanate and who was mentioned in the earlier Muscovite documents as an enemy of the tsar, was compelled to send his envoy to Murad Girey and to the tsar so that he would be “taken under his tsar’s hand and serve him until the end of his life.”⁷⁹ Although we know that Solokh continued to support the Ottomans and Crimeans, he used Murad Girey’s presence in Muscovy as an excuse to approach the tsar possibly in order to prevent raids on his territory by the rival Kabardinian chiefs and by the voevoda of Terek and his Cossacks.

Despite being on the rise, Muscovite power was still limited. In July 1589, Kanbulat died at the age of 97, which brought about internal strife in Kabarda over the election of a new *pshihua*. It is significant that apparently the Muscovites did not have the power to install their own candidate directly. However, they tried to help their allies indirectly, especially Mamstriuk, Kudenek, and other sons of Kanbulat in this internal struggle among the Kabardinian chiefs for the position. The chiefs loyal to Muscovy wrote to the tsar that they needed his help in defeating the non-allied chiefs in Kabarda and petitioned the tsar to send

⁷⁸ Ibid., 52-53.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 68; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 55-56

them *strel'tsy* and Cossacks.⁸⁰ Names of pro- and anti-Muscovite chiefs in 1589 were also confirmed in a letter by the voevoda of Terek, who wrote that Mamstriuk, Kudenek, and his two bothers, Khotov and Ochekan, were loyal to the tsar but the *shamkhal*, mountain princes, and Tümen chief had still not come to Terek to submit to the tsar.⁸¹

The main rivalry in Kabarda was between descendants of Temriuk and Kanbulat on the one side and Aslanbek and Solokh families on the other. In the fall of 1589, the tsar's envoys traveled through Kabarda en route to King Alexander II of Kakheti. They brought tsar's gifts to the Kabardinian chiefs who were considered as being loyal to the tsar or whose alliances were desired.⁸² Although Aslanbek was among the chiefs for whom gifts were sent, he had long been known in Muscovy as an ally of the Ottomans and the Crimean khan. In a letter to the voevoda of Terek, the tsar ordered that, "Aslanbek should be separated from the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars and be brought under his tsar's hand."⁸³ By that time, Aslanbek had been elected as the *pshihua* of Kabarda. With Aslanbek's election, the position of the *pshihua* passed from the family of Temriuk, i.e., from the Idar(ovich)s to the Kaytuks. That is why Aslanbek was important for the Muscovite policymakers. When the tsar's envoys arrived in Kabarda, however, they learned that Aslanbek had already died and now "the Kabardinians wanted to make his brother Yansokh the *pshihua* of Kabarda."⁸⁴ In fact, Yansokh was elected the *pshihua* of Kabarda in October 1589 as reported to Moscow by the

⁸⁰ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 84-85; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 57-58.

⁸¹ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 56-57.

⁸² *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 108-09.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

voevoda of Terek.⁸⁵ Unlike Aslanbek, after he was elected he chose to submit to the tsar. One reason for this swift change in the orientation of the Kaytuk family in the person of Yansokh could be explained within the context of the internal politics of Kabarda. Namely, he might have been elected by the Kabardinian chiefs on the condition that he would submit to the Muscovite tsar. Since there are no written records of the Kabardinian councils, this cannot be proved. However, considering that many strong chiefs including the Kanbulat's sons and Temriuk's sons sided with Muscovy and could receive military help from Terek, there is a very high possibility that he was chosen under several conditions and submission to Muscovy was the only way for him to keep his brother's post.

Other pro-Ottoman/Crimean Kabardinian chiefs known by the Muscovites at that time in Kabarda were Solokh and Alkas for whom the tsar also sent gifts. They were both influential and strong men in Kabarda and apparently the Muscovites wanted to obtain their allegiance by using their old strategy of gifts and annuities. However, at first, Solokh and Alkas refrained from meeting with the Muscovite envoys. When the envoys asked the Cossacks in the area the reason, the Cossacks explained that Mamstriuk and Kudenek went to Solokh to take him to the envoys, but the latter "did not welcome them because Mamstriuk and Kudenek brought the Muscovite soldiers and fortresses to Terek and Kabarda."⁸⁶ As pointed out above, some Kabardinian chiefs considered the Muscovite fortresses and soldiers in the area as being a direct threat to their independence. In contrast, although the Ottomans planned several times, neither they nor the Crimeans built fortresses in Kabarda. Considering this, some Kabardinian chiefs such as Solokh might have thought that the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 80-82; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 62-64.

⁸⁶ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 136.

Ottomans/Crimeans with no fortresses and permanent soldiers in Kabarda would be a better option as far as maintaining their independence was concerned.

The Kabardinian chiefs who visited the Muscovite envoys in September 1589 at the Sunzha fort and made the *shert'* were Aslanbek's son Chopolov, Kudenek, Buzuruk Murza (could be the Bozok or Buzuk mentioned in the Ottoman documents), Azlov and Shumunuk, nephews of Khotov.⁸⁷ All of these princes and mirzas mentioned above "gave their *shert'* in accordance with the Muslim faith."⁸⁸ It is understood that most of the Kabardinian chiefs were by then Muslims. Chopolov also gave the *shert'* in the name of his uncle Yansokh, at that time the would-be *pshihua* of Kabarda. Since many strong Kabardinian chiefs were now turning to the Muscovites, the pro-Ottoman/Crimean party was facing a larger and more powerful opposition. As such, Alkas and Solokh eventually decided to swear the pledge of allegiance to the Muscovite tsar in the fall of 1589 and received their gifts from the Muscovite envoys.⁸⁹ It is understood from the words of the envoys to Alkas that if he did not submit to the tsar, he would face the wrath of the tsar, "because the sovereign's army from Terek and other Kabardinian princes loyal to the sovereign will attack him."⁹⁰ Apart from such threats, there was also the issue of the tsar's gifts and annuities which were attractive for these local rulers. However, gifts and annuities were only secondary for the local chiefs in comparison with their concerns regarding the realpolitik in Kabarda. Therefore, chiefs such as Solokh and Alkas did not change their allegiance because of the gifts and annuities but

⁸⁷ Ibid., 133.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 134-35.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 141-43, 145-46.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 143.

rather because of the changing balance of power in Kabarda and military threats from Muscovy. It should also be remembered at this point that these pledges did not mean much to these local rulers and they could still switch their allegiances easily. Some of these chiefs maintained their contacts with the Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars as explained above.

Another tool of the Muscovite strategy in their dealings with the local rulers, apart from *shert*, annuities, and gifts was *amanat*, i.e., hostage-giving as a security (*amanat*, from Arabic, lit., “faithfulness”). We know that Temriuk did not submit any hostages. It was probably due to the fact that his daughter was married to Muscovite Tsar Ivan IV and one of his sons, Mikhail, was in the tsar’s service in Moscow. Kanbulat and Mamstriuk also did not give any hostages until 1589 when Kabardinian affairs became complicated. In July 1589, Mamstriuk and Kanbulat’s son Kudenek had to submit hostages to the voevoda of Terek after they received their annuities from the tsar. Mamstriuk gave his *atalık* who was one of his *works*, Eltiuk, and Kudenek gave his son, Adaruk, to the voevoda of Terek as *amanat*.⁹¹ It is understood from Muscovite envoy Zvenigorodskii and Antonov’s conversation with the voevoda of Terek in 1589 that Alkas and Solokh were the only Kabardinian chiefs who did not give any hostages to the voevoda. Although the Muscovite text suggests that all other Kabardinian chiefs submitted a hostage to the voevoda, namely swore allegiance to Muscovy, it is reasonable to think that they only take the politically important and strong chiefs in Kabarda into consideration. Zvenigorodskii and Antonov’s travels through Kabarda and negotiations with the Kabardinian chiefs had many examples of how rigid the Muscovites were about receiving hostages from the local rulers in the area and did their best to collect those hostages in their negotiations.

⁹¹ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 58-60.

Although they swore allegiance to the Muscovite tsar, neither Alkas nor Solokh wanted to give any hostages to the Muscovites. Swearing the pledge and receiving the gifts was one thing but giving hostages was another. When Alkas, through mediation of Mamstriuk, finally visited the Muscovite envoys in 1589 he said, “he always wanted to serve the tsar.” Accordingly, the envoys asked him to make the *shert'* and give hostages as Chopolov, Mamstriuk, Kudenek and all other Kabardinian chiefs had done.⁹² Alkas told them that he could not give *shert'* or hostages but could ride with the envoys to their destination, the lands of King Alexander II. The envoys refused and said that they knew that the Circassians had the same custom of rendering *shert'* and hostages and that this was the only way that his submission would be approved. Eventually Alkas agreed to give *shert'* but insisted on not giving any hostages. The envoys refused again. Then Alkas threatened that he would leave them and that the envoys' route went through his *kabak*, thus implying that he could harm the envoys on their journey. Upon this, the Muscovite envoys said that if he did not submit to the tsar, the voevoda of Terek and the loyal Kabardinian chiefs would send an army against him. Seeing how unyielding the envoys were with the procedures, Alkas finally agreed to make the *shert'* and to give hostages from among his *works*.⁹³ A similar negotiation took place between the Muscovite envoys and Solokh, who eventually accepted to give the *shert'* and hostages as well.⁹⁴ Clearly the Muscovites were quite rigid with these issues and never yielded in the negotiations, even when threatened by the local rulers.

⁹² *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 142-43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 143-44.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

Not all hostages had the same value so whenever possible, the Muscovites tried to take a son of the local ruler, or a nephew. If not, they were satisfied with someone of noble origin from rulers' retinue. For example, Alkas and Mamstriuk gave their *works* as hostages to the Muscovites and these were accepted. However, if there was an issue of disobedience or distrust, the Muscovites demanded a son of the vassal chief rather than gentry. For example, when the Cossacks caught Alkas helping some Kumyks going to Daghestan from Solokh's lands, he was accused of betraying the tsar and was asked to submit his son as a surety.⁹⁵ Similarly, in the letters sent to the voevoda of Terek and from the voevoda of Astrakhan to Moscow, taking of a son of the *shamkhal* as a hostage to secure his loyalty was an issue that was constantly mentioned.⁹⁶

All these overtures, hostages and *shert*'s, however, did not save Alkas and Solokh. The rival chiefs complained about them to the Muscovite envoys saying, the *shamkhal*, Alkas, and Solokh were in alliance with Murad Girey who would eventually betray the Muscovite tsar along with the Nogays and Circassian chiefs; he then would give Astrakhan to the Ottoman sultan as there was Muslim unity between them.⁹⁷ The Muscovite envoys and the voevoda did not trust Solokh and in December 750 *strel'tsy* and Cossacks in alliance with Yansokh, the *pshihua* of Kabarda, and some other pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs raided Solokh's lands. Solokh asked for peace and gave the Muscovites his son and twenty of his *works* as surety. The raid and its outcome was a true expression of power by the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 148.

⁹⁶ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 60-61.

⁹⁷ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 168, 183. The Circassian talking with the envoys was Abzhuk-Korak and he was a cousin of Khotov. He said, "...at the time when the prince [Murad Girey] arrives in Astrakhan, they [Murad Girey, the *shamkhal*, Solokh, Alkas] will unite and bring the Turks to Astrakhan... the prince [Murad Girey] will deliver the city [to the Turks]."

Muscovites.⁹⁸ It should be noted that Yansokh, in this raid, was probably trying to weaken Solokh who was his main rival for the position of the *pshihua* rather than defending Muscovite interests in Kabarda. Indeed the internal politics of Kabarda and power struggles among the Kabardinian chiefs played a very significant role—much more significant than historians so far have been willing to admit. By the end of 1589, the strongest Kabardinian families submitted to the Muscovite tsar thanks to the proactive Muscovite policy in the North Caucasus.

The international situation on the western borders of Muscovy and the position of the Ottoman Empire encouraged the Muscovites to further pursue their priorities in the southeast. In 1590, a peace agreement between Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was reached. Similarly, in 1593 Sweden agreed to sign a treaty to end hostilities. These developments paved the way for Muscovite officials to apply their southern frontier strategies more aggressively in the North Caucasus. On the other hand, the Ottoman Porte was preparing for a long war in the west against the Habsburg Empire and its allies, which started in 1593. Furthermore, Ottoman armies were weakened in the wars against the Safavids between 1578 and 1590. The tsar and Muscovite officials were also heartened by proposals brought by the envoys from Safavid Shah Abbas in 1588 and from Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II in 1589 and in 1593 to form a united front against the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁹ The shah even offered Derbend and Baku to the Muscovite tsar as a reward for his

⁹⁸ Ibid., 181-83.

⁹⁹ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 139; *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii Moskovskoi Rusi s Persiei*, ed. N. I. Veselovskii (St. Petersburg: Iablonskii and Perrot, 1890), 1:54; *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi*, (St. Petersburg: Tipografii II Otdielenia sobstvennoi E. I. V. Kantseliarii, 1851), 1:1011-12.

participation in such an alliance.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the conditions were just right for an intensification of Muscovite activities in Kabarda and the North Caucasus in general.

The Muscovites reconstructed the old Muscovite fortress on the Sunzha River in 1590. Compared to other Muscovite fortresses on the southern frontier, the new fortress on Sunzha was small but effective for manipulation of Kabardinian internal politics. In the mid-1590s they also constructed a fortress in Daghestan on the Koisu River, Koisinskii Ostrog. Apart from these fortresses in the North Caucasus, the Muscovites had already built a fortress in Livny on the Don River in 1586 and another one on the Yaik River was completed in 1595 to contain the Greater Nogays. Therefore, the Muscovite southern steppe frontier defence line steadily extended southward and by the mid-1590 it formed a line going through the North Caucasus: from the mouth of the Yaik River through Astrakhan to the mouth of Terek and Sunzha, and from Sunzha to Tsaritsin between the Don and Volga and to Livny on the Don River.

Indeed, these activities of Muscovy did not go unnoticed by the Porte and the Crimean khan. The Porte had already been gathering information through its spies and clients in the North Caucasus and among the Greater Nogays.¹⁰¹ In 1592, the Ottoman sultan wrote to the Crimean khan about the spread of Muscovite fortresses in the North Caucasus. The sultan ordered him to attack and capture these fortresses. He said, “the Muscovites had been erecting fortresses along the Terek River. They had by now ten thousand musketeers in these fortresses.” Moreover, the Porte knew that the Muscovites were protectors of some of the Kabardinian chiefs and they were now fixing their eyes on Daghestan, trying to secure the

¹⁰⁰ *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snoshenii*, 54.

¹⁰¹ MD 69, no. 447.

allegiance of the Daghestani *shamkhal*.¹⁰² On the other hand, the Muscovites were aware of the fact that the Ottomans were concerned about these fortresses and that the sultan ordered the khan to attack Kabarda and other parts of the North Caucasus and capture them.¹⁰³ In 1593, Ottoman Sultan Murad III wrote to the tsar about these fortresses along the Terek River and in Daghestan. He asked the tsar to “demolish these fortresses built in the lands that belonged to the sultan.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, in the same year, the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars planned that Mübarek Girey, a son of the Crimean khan, would with Ottoman support carry out a campaign to capture the Terek fortress.¹⁰⁵ Despite such reactions by the Ottomans and the khan’s direct attack into Muscovite territories, the Muscovites did not abandon their fortresses. It was through these fortresses that the Muscovites managed to ensure the survival of the pro-Muscovite party in Kabarda. The military value of these fortresses is obvious. Considering that the Kabardinians could muster only 1500 horsemen, the existence of a thousand Muscovite *strel'tsy* and Cossacks who carried muskets had a serious effect on the balance of power among the chieftains of Kabarda.

In addition to their strategic and military value, the Muscovite fortresses created an economic sphere of influence, which was a significant component of the fortress strategy. As soon as a fortress was built in a certain area in the steppes, the Muscovite forces began to control economic resources of the area as well. These resources could be passageways, fisheries, river routes, grazing lands, or arable lands. The Muscovite policymakers calculated

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 281.

¹⁰⁴ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 3, fol. 272a-275a.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., fol. 259a-260a.

such strategic and economic issues when they decided to build fortresses in the southern steppes.¹⁰⁶ For example, upon his submission the Muscovite tsar in 1589 during the visit of the Muscovite envoys, Kabardinian Chief Solokh requested that “his people would be allowed to use the fisheries along the Terek River controlled by the Muscovite forces, his men would not be harmed by the Muscovite forces at the crossings, and that the tsar should help him and send him men against his enemies.”¹⁰⁷

These requests explain clearly how the fortresses in the area affected local economies and balance of power among the local chiefs. The Muscovite forces from the Terek fortress that had been built in 1588 controlled the fisheries along the Terek River, which were extremely important for Kabardinian people living in the vicinity. The Muscovites restricted the use of these fisheries to their own vassals in the region and effectively prevented others from using them. They also supported their allies in Kabarda against their enemies by providing them with men including Cossacks from the fortress of Terek. Therefore we can say that the construction of a network of fortresses was the backbone of the Muscovite policy in the southern frontier. It enabled the Muscovites to have a direct influence over the area and people whom they wanted to co-opt and upon whom impose vassalage.

3.3. Once and For All: The Muscovite Attempts at Dominating Daghestan and the Denouement of the Imperial Rivalry in the North Caucasus

The Muscovite officials were very much interested in Daghestan, domination of which would complete Muscovite ascendancy in the north-western part of the Caspian Sea and provide free passage to Iran and the Georgian kingdoms. Moreover, a Muscovite sovereignty over the

¹⁰⁶ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 400-02.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

Daghestani polities would allow Muscovy to have a buffer zone to protect Astrakhan and the lower Volga from Crimean and Ottoman threats. Rather than trying to directly subdue the Daghestani rulers, who were when united stronger than other North Caucasus rulers, the Muscovites tried to control the Kabardinian lands first, the reasons for which have just been explained. As soon as they secured their position in Kabarda, they began to penetrate Daghestani lands in the late 1580s and 1590s.

It has already been mentioned above that the Muscovite tsar, Ivan IV, received envoys from Dagestan as early as 1557-1558. Just as the Muscovite tsar was regarded as a possible ally by the Adyghes and Kabardinians, so too the *shamkhal* wanted to explore the new balance of power and benefit from the Muscovite presence in the area.¹⁰⁸ At first, the *shamkhal* of Daghestan asked the Muscovite tsar to protect him from the Kabardinian chiefs, who raided his territories.¹⁰⁹ It should be remembered, negotiations between Muscovy and the Daghestani *shamkhal* ended with no agreement. The Muscovite fortress on the Terek built in 1567, however, became influential over the Daghestani polities as well. We know that Temriuk with Muscovite support was able to control some of the *shamkhal*'s lands in the late 1560s.¹¹⁰

In 1578 with a new fortress in Kabarda and submission of some important Kabardinian chiefs, a new game began for the Muscovites. It was also then that the Ottomans began to control the South Caucasus from their Anatolian front and were determined to bring

¹⁰⁸ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 231.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 231.

¹¹⁰ Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 52.

the North Caucasus under their complete control. The Ottoman offensive in the Caucasus and a possible Ottoman domination of the region were of utmost significance for all states and polities in the broader region. From the Muscovite perspective, an Ottoman domination over the North Caucasus and Daghestan must have meant a constant threat to Astrakhan and perhaps even Kazan. From the perspective of the local rulers, who had been supportive of the Ottoman presence in the Caucasus, it was a little bit more complicated. It was not until the Ottomans established themselves in Derbend that the *shamkhal*, who sided with the Ottomans in the Ottoman-Safavid War, realized that a permanent and regular Ottoman governance in Derbend and dominance over the North Caucasus would eventually restrict his own freedom. While his hands were tied when Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, who succeeded in subduing the whole Daghestani lands, was in Derbend, as soon as Osman Pasha left Derbend an opportunity to challenge the Ottoman authority was presented by the activities of the afore-mentioned fugitive Crimean prince Murad Girey. Murad Girey allied himself with the *shamkhal* and the Muscovites against the Ottomans following the Crimean succession crisis of 1584 and his bid for the Crimean throne. Due to the aforementioned events with regard to Murad Girey, the relationship between the *shamkhal* and the Porte became strained but diplomatic contact did not cease. Because of their fear of Ottoman domination in the North Caucasus, the Muscovites paid special attention to the *shamkhal*'s position and sent men from Astrakhan in 1586 to learn about *shamkhal*'s orientation and the state of the Ottoman army in Derbend.¹¹¹

The foundation of Terek Town at the mouth of the Terek River in 1588 increased the Muscovite influence in Daghestan. The new Muscovite fortress was a source of pressure on

¹¹¹ Smirnov, *Rossii i Turtsiia*, 138.

the *shamkhal* and other Daghestani rulers. In 1589, the *shamkhal* was already hesitating between the Porte and Muscovy. According to the letter of the voevoda of Terek to the Posol'skii Prikaz, the *shamkhal* said to the Ottoman governor in Derbend that he did not wish to serve either the Ottomans or the Muscovites.¹¹² We understand from the same letter that the Muscovite officials were trying to subdue the *shamkhal*. The voevoda was ordered to ensure that the *shamkhal* would be taken under his tsar's hand and would be forced to give his son or his *uzden* to the voevoda of Terek as *amanat*.¹¹³

Increasing pressure and threats of war from the Muscovites and the shamkhalate's traditional enmity with Georgian King Alexander II of Kakheti, who was a vassal of Muscovy¹¹⁴ eventually led the *shamkhal* to ask for military support from the Ottoman Porte. In 1589, he wrote to the Ottoman sultan about the Muscovite attempts in Daghestan, their new fortresses, and their anti-Ottoman alliances with other Christian states in Europe and with the Safavids in the Caucasus. He said if the sultan does not stop the Muscovites now, his empire would come to an end.¹¹⁵ Because of the *shamkhal*'s eventual decision to side with the Ottomans, the end of the Murad Girey affair, and petitions from Alexander II of Kakheti,¹¹⁶ in 1591 the Muscovite tsar ordered the voevodas of Astrakhan and Terek and the Kabardinian chiefs to muster their armies for an attack on the lands of the *shamkhal*.¹¹⁷

¹¹² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 58-60.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

¹¹⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 79, 112

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 203; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 36.

¹¹⁶ For example, see *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 128, 146, 174.

¹¹⁷ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 64-65.

The Kabardinian chiefs loyal to Muscovy indeed supported the Muscovite efforts in Daghestan and in 1592, the voevoda of Terek, Knyaz Zasekin with an army of five thousand musketeers and ten thousand Kabardinians entered the *shamkhal*'s land. But it was only a punitive raid and the Muscovite army returned back to Terek in the same year.¹¹⁸ This raid, on the one hand, enlivened the Muscovite relations with the Kakheti King, Alexander II, who had been asking for the tsar's help against the *shamkhal*. On the other hand, it cemented the *shamkhal*'s and other Daghestani rulers' loyalty to the Ottoman Porte. Next year, with the encouragement of the Georgian envoys, the Muscovites decided to capture Tarku, the capital of the shamkhalat, and decisively establish their authority over Daghestan.

In the summer of 1593, the Muscovite tsar ordered that preparations for a decisive campaign in Daghestan under the command of Knyaz Andrei Khvorostinin begin. The tsar informed Georgian envoys Aram and Kiril, who were in Moscow representing Alexander II, that the *shamkhal* would be replaced by Alexander II's ally, the *Krym-Shamkhal* of Daghestan.¹¹⁹ At that time, the Ottomans were closely following the activities of the Muscovites. They asked the Crimean khan to send an army against the Muscovite fortresses in the North Caucasus.¹²⁰ The Crimean khan, however, did not actively send military support the Daghestani *shamkhal* but rather preferred to attack the Muscovite lands directly.¹²¹ As such, Knyaz Khvorostinin managed to capture Tarku easily in July 1593. The *shamkhal* was wounded in the battle and retreated to the mountains. Khvorostinin began to prepare for more

¹¹⁸ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 278; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 253-54.

¹¹⁹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 253-54, 256.

¹²⁰ MD 69, no. 447.

¹²¹ Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism*, 112-14.

warfare in Daghestan as the *shamkhal* was still a threat and meanwhile waited for the troops of Alexander II, which was expected to join the Muscovite army. Upon this, the Porte took action and informed the *shamkhal* that he and his lands would be saved from the Muscovites and ordered him to communicate with Cafer Pasha who would send men to Daghestan to expel the Muscovite troops.¹²² In spite of knowing that Alexander II was in alliance with the Muscovite tsar, the Porte even wrote to Alexander II and ordered him to help the *shamkhal* against the Muscovites. In order to intimidate him, it was written in this letter that Ottoman governors of Van, Diyarbakır, and Gence would combine their troops and set off to expel these Muscovite troops and Cossacks.¹²³ This was obviously a veiled threat to Alexander II. Cafer Pasha was also ordered to help the *shamkhal* with provincial Ottoman forces from Derbend. With the help of the Ottomans, the Daghestani rulers combined their forces to a level of around fifteen thousand.¹²⁴ Finally, in the summer of 1594 the united forces of the Daghestanis with the support of an Ottoman soldiers and cannons under the command of Adil Girey, a son of the *shamkhal*, managed to re-take Tarku and defeat the Muscovite army of seven thousand strong.¹²⁵ The Muscovites lost three thousand men and this defeat briefly put an end to the Muscovite activities in Daghestan. Although this is one of the turning points in the history of the North Caucasus along with the 1605 defeat of the Muscovites, unfortunately there are no further details on this event in our sources.

¹²² MD 72, entry number is illegible.

¹²³ MD 72, no. 278.

¹²⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 292; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 94.

¹²⁵ PSRL, *Novyi lietopisets* (St. Petersburg, 1910; Reprint, Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 14:45-46; MD 72, no. 279. Boris Nolde provides a French translation of the related passage from the *Novyi lietopisets* in his *Le formation de l'Empire russe* (Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves, 1953), 2:317-18.

This war and defeat showed the Muscovite policymakers several things at once. First, whenever a real threat took place, in spite of their mutual enmities, Daghestani rulers could unite. Second, the Georgian king, who promised to send men to Daghestan, could not be relied upon. Third, although engaged in Europe, the Porte was determined to preserve its influence and would not easily leave Daghestan to the Muscovites. In the case of Alexander II, the Muscovites accused him of causing the defeat of the Muscovite forces because he did not send his troops.¹²⁶ Apparently, subtle threat from the Porte was enough to prevent Alexander II from sending any men to help the Muscovites.

From this point on, the Muscovites realized that the *shamkhal* of Daghestan was a formidable ruler in the area. Although now the *shamkhalat* had already been divided into several principalities ruled by the sons and brothers of the *shamkhal*, the position of the *shamkhal* held a certain prestige that could be used to unite the Daghestani rulers in the face of foreign invasions. In 1599, the tsar was told that if he could bring to his side various local rulers, mountaineers, and Circassians, the *shamkhal* could muster an army of fifteen thousand horsemen and many more infantry.¹²⁷ So, at the end of the sixteenth century the *shamkhal* could pose a serious threat to the Muscovite ambitions not only in the lands of Daghestan but also in the whole North Caucasus, especially if the Daghestanis were supported by Ottoman soldiers and cannons. The Muscovites were aware of the fact that the Daghestanis intensified their contacts with the Ottomans in Shirvan and Şemahı and that one of the sons of the *shamkhal*, Sultan Mahmud, remained with the Ottomans in Şemahı.¹²⁸ The Muscovite

¹²⁶ *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings*, 371.

¹²⁷ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 292.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 449.

envoys, who traveled to Kakheta in 1604, were told that as soon as the Ottomans arrived to support him, the *shamkhal* would attack the Muscovite fortresses in the North Caucasus. They were also informed that the Kabardinian chiefs Kazy (Gazi) and Solokh were in alliance with the Ottomans and the *shamkhal*.¹²⁹ It should be noted here that without the Ottomans, these local chiefs could not have dared to resist the Muscovite power. Therefore, even the possibility of an Ottoman intervention was an important concern to the Muscovites and to the local rulers.

In fact, in 1603, envoys of Kabardinian chiefs Solokh and Kazy were received in Moscow and as usual they claimed to be under the hand of the Muscovite tsar.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, in spite of the *shert* given in 1589, neither Solokh nor Kazy were actually loyal to the Muscovites and they were waiting for an opportunity to oust the Muscovites from the North Caucasus with the Daghestani rulers and Ottoman/Crimean help. We know that Sultan Mahmud's envoys to the tsar were also with the Kabardinians in 1604.¹³¹ Moreover, in 1602 the tsar had already received envoys from another son of the *shamkhal*, Andi. However, these missions to the Muscovite tsar by the Daghestani rulers were most probably sent to dissuade the Muscovites from organizing punitive campaigns in the Daghestani lands as most of the Daghestani rulers still remained on the Ottoman/Crimean side.

News about the activities of the Ottomans to bring the *shamkhal*, Daghestani rulers, and pro-Ottoman Kabardinian chiefs together in order to march on the Muscovite fortresses

¹²⁹ Ibid., 449-50.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 365-72.

¹³¹ Ibid., 365-66. According to this Muscovite document regarding the arrival of the Kabardinian envoys led by Siunchal Murza Ianglychev, Sultan Mahmud sent two envoys named İbrahim and Derviş to Tsar Boris Godunov.

in the first years of the seventeenth century led to Muscovite preparations for another campaign against the *shamkhal* and Daghestan. This second attempt to establish sovereignty over Daghestan was designed to pre-empt a threat that could come from combined forces of the Daghestanis and Kabardinians supported by the Ottomans. The year was 1604 when the Ottomans were engaged in wars against the Habsburgs in the west and against the Safavids in the east. Therefore, the Muscovites must have been aware of this and considered it to be a good time to attack Daghestan. In 1604 Tsar Boris Godunov ordered the voevoda of Terek, Ivan Baturlin, to capture the lands of the *shamkhal* once and for all with an army of ten thousand. The pre-emptive Muscovite offensive started in the spring of 1604. In April 1604, Baturlin's army captured Tarku, Anderi, Koysu, and Kara-Budak . The *shamkhal* was forced to retreat into the mountains again. Meanwhile, Baturlin strengthened the walls of the Tarku fortress with stone, building a *kamennyi gorod* (lit., "stone town"). In addition to this, he built several other forts in Daghestan in a short time. These new Muscovite forts caused further concerns among the rulers of Daghestan.¹³² Fearing total Muscovite domination in Daghestan and eventual loss of their independence, they once again united under the person of the *shamkhal*.

By this time, armies of the new Safavid shah, Abbas, were advancing into the Caucasus. In spite of such an imminent threat from Iran, the Ottoman Porte decided to support the Daghestani forces with troops and cannons from Derbend.¹³³ This is an

¹³² PSRL, 14: 57-58; Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 288; M. S. K. Umakhanov, "Problema beglykh vo vzaimootnosheniakh dagestanskikh feodalov s tsarskoi administratsiei na Severnom Kavkaze v XVI-XVIII vv.," in *Dagestan v sostave Rossii: Istoricheskie korni druzhby narodov Rossii i Dagestana*, ed. N. A. Magomedov (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii Filial AN SSSR, 1990), 74-78.

¹³³ The Muscovite sources indicate that the Ottoman pasha and his men, including janissaries, came to Tarku to help the Daghestanis. However the arrival of the pasha himself in Daghestan cannot be confirmed in the

indication of the fact that the Ottomans were aware of the importance of the loyalty of the Daghestani rulers for their own presence in the North and South Caucasus. They must have also known from experience that Muscovite ambitions had to be checked before it was too late as in the case of Kazan and Astrakhan. With the current Ottoman help, the Daghestani forces once again united under the command of two sons of the *shamkhal*, Adil Girey and Sultan Mahmud. As seen above, Sultan Mahmud was on the tsar's payroll but he did not hesitate to lead the Daghestani armies against the Muscovites, which shows that the main objective of such gestures on the part of the Daghestanis was to ensure non-aggressiveness of the Muscovites towards Daghestan rather than to submit to them. The combined Daghestani forces took Koysu fort and besieged Tarku, where Baturlin was commanding the remaining Muscovite troops of seven thousand men. The Tarku fortress was under heavy bombardment thanks to the Ottoman cannons and reinforcements from Şemahı.¹³⁴ Muscovite commander Baturlin was in no position to defend Tarku in the face of the heavy artillery bombardment. Eventually, Baturlin and Sultan Mahmud agreed on terms for handing over the fortress of Tarku to the Daghestanis and allowing Muscovite soldiers to withdraw with their arms. The Daghestanis, however, did not honour their promise and suddenly attacked the retreating Muscovite troops, annihilating all the men including Baturlin and other commanders. This occurred in the second week of June 1605.¹³⁵ This year was also the date of the final act of the North Caucasus play started by Muscovy in 1556. After this defeat, the Daghestani and

Ottoman sources and seems to be an exaggeration, perhaps to explain the Muscovite defeat in 1605. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 288; PSRL, 14:57-58.

¹³⁴ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 288; Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya*, 86; Nolde, *Le formation de l'Empire russe*, 2: 321-23.

¹³⁵ Allen, *Russian Embassies*, 549-50; Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 288; Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 40.

Ottoman forces captured the Muscovite fortresses in Daghestan and in Kabarda. The Muscovites, on the other hand, were not able to take any action to reverse the situation as the Time of Troubles had already begun in Moscow.

Muscovite policy in the North Caucasus was at one point quite effective as they were able to establish their hegemony over Kabarda and become a power to be reckoned with in Daghestan. This success was thanks to their capable steppe frontier policy that included economic and political incentives for local rulers so as to co-opt them, as well as their diplomatic skills,¹³⁶ out of which the new policy of the Russian Empire would eventually spring. In spite of personal struggles for power among the boyars after the death of Ivan IV in 1584 and even dynastic extinctions in 1598, Muscovite policy in the south continued to function as designed. It has been indicated that compared to initial Ottoman northern policy, which was flexible and based on the personal opinions of influential officials in the Porte, the rigid, central, and grand Muscovite steppe policy was a long-term policy and more effective in the shared steppe frontier zone in the north of the Black Sea, including the North Caucasus.

It was only in the late 1560s that the officials in Istanbul, at least the influential ones, realized the danger for the Ottoman Empire coming from the north with the expansion of Muscovy. After 1569, Ottoman officials started to implement an active and mature policy in the North Caucasus, which had the aim of drawing in and subduing the local rulers of the region and making them loyal allies of the Ottoman Porte and, if possible, converting them to Islam to cement their vassalage. In fact, such a change in the Ottoman policy did not have a

¹³⁶ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 114.

parallel change in the Muscovite policy in the sixteenth century. The Muscovites continued to pursue their steppe frontier strategies which had produced favourable results in the Black Sea steppes earlier in the sixteenth century.

While the change in policy helped the Ottomans oust the Muscovites in the first phase of the imperial rivalry in the North Caucasus, as we saw, even the improved, more mature Ottoman policy had certain weaknesses. The Ottoman bureaucratic machine was slow in taking necessary actions in the North Caucasus. For example, in spite of several attempts, the Ottomans could not manage to construct fortresses in the North Caucasus due to the individual opinions of officials in the Ottoman camp including the Crimean khan. On the other hand, construction of fortresses was handled with ease by the Muscovites and it was a part of their policy in this region. For this reason, they were able to build several fortresses and redoubts in the North Caucasus in a very short time. With skilful diplomacy and sometimes by backing off, the Muscovites were successful in maintaining their presence in the North Caucasus for a long time in spite of the fact that militarily Muscovy was no match for the Ottoman Empire. Muscovite officials made their first mistake by trying to conquer Daghestan directly with their own armies, which was different than their methods of controlling Kabarda. Muscovy lost the struggle for the North Caucasus in the sixteenth century and was forced to leave the region. It was only a century later, during the reign of Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725), the Russians would return to the North Caucasus with an aim of annexing Derbend and Mazanderan.

CHAPTER 4

OTTOMAN AND MUSCOVITE IMPERIAL POLICIES IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS COMPARED

The imperial powers had their own specific patterns of expansion and control in the North Caucasus, which were at times similar to one another, but at other times much different. In the second half of the sixteenth century, alliances in the region and political alignments of the North Caucasus polities were to undergo dramatic changes. There were two main reasons for such a change. First, after conquering the Khanate of Kazan in 1552 and Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556, Muscovy became one of the contenders—and a strong one—for suzerainty over the North Caucasus. Second, officials in the Ottoman Porte decided to undertake a full-scale imperial campaign against the Safavid Iran with an objective of annexing territories in the Caucasus and in Azerbaijan and of establishing a well-defined suzerainty over the North Caucasus. Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus cannot be considered independently of a broader Ottoman northern policy, the underlying motivation of which was to maintain exclusive control over the Black Sea. Just as the Ottomans considered the North Caucasus within their broader northern policy, the Muscovites applied their coherent steppe policy in the North Caucasus.

It was the Muscovite strategies and ambitions over the region in the second half of the sixteenth century that brought about fundamental changes in the policy of the Ottoman Empire. This period also marked the internationalization of the North Caucasus. Although they enjoyed broad independence, the North Caucasus polities except Daghestan had been under the sway of the Crimean Khanate until the Muscovite involvement in the region. The Safavids were also

active and considered themselves overlords of the Daghestani principalities. Therefore, the aforementioned internationalization means involvement of the Ottomans and Muscovites as rival powers in the region, which changed the local and international status quo in the North Caucasus.

In the north, the Ottoman Empire established its suzerainty through a system of vassal states and principalities which had varying degrees of autonomy. Thanks to the Black Sea region steppe zone, the Ottoman northern frontiers were vague and undefined. The limitations of the Ottoman system and flexibility of the steppe politics of the Crimean Khanate, a vassal of the Porte and one of the major players in the steppes, with a formidable army capable of raiding Muscovite and Polish lands, made this frontier a broad zone of danger and uncertainty. The role of the Crimean Khanate, which will be explained below, was one of the cornerstones of Ottoman northern policy and its specifics in the North Caucasus. It should be also stressed that prior to the Muscovite involvement, neither the Crimean Tatars nor the Ottomans wanted to incorporate the North Caucasus region into their realms. They were content with a nominal claim of sovereignty in the region, which was based on slave raids and tributes extracted from local rulers in the region by the Crimeans. Even the initial concern of the Ottoman Porte when Muscovy asserted itself as a power to be reckoned with was to protect the status quo rather than to engineer new strategies to incorporate the region.

As for the Muscovites, their strategies in the North Caucasus was a part of their steppe frontier policy that had come into existence out of Muscovy's dealings with the post-Golden Horde political structures on its eastern and southern frontiers. As such, Muscovite policy in the North Caucasus was fundamentally the same policy that enabled Muscovites to be successful in their struggle against the post-Golden Horde khanates and other political structures in the

steppes. The North Caucasus which had been dominated by the Golden Horde was a region that Muscovite officials must have considered as having to belong to their realm.

4.1. An Overview and Comparison of Ottoman Northern Policy and Muscovite Steppe Policy

Ottoman northern policy focused on one objective: to secure and control the Black Sea as a *mare nostrum*. The Ottomans followed a policy with an aim of controlling the Black Sea to ensure the flow of wealth from its shores. Their control for a long time provided the Ottoman Empire with means to prevent increase in the prices of foodstuff and other materials coming from the Black Sea region.¹ Muscovite steppe policy had also one main objective: to “tame” the steppes and put an end to the endless waves of nomadic hordes raiding Muscovite territories. For the Muscovites, the steppes and the North Caucasus was yet another “perilous frontier”² between the steppe powers and sedentary peoples in Eurasia.

Ottoman northern and Muscovite steppe policies had some similarities but they were fundamentally different. One of the similarities was that both the Ottomans and Muscovites preferred to operate primarily through their vassals in the Pontic-Caspian steppes. This role was mainly played by the Crimean Tatars for the Ottoman Porte and by the Cossacks for Muscovy. In fact, the most important tool of Ottoman policy in the north was the Crimean Khanate. Crimean vassalage should not, however, be equated with the vassalage of Walachia and Moldavia. The Crimean Khanate, which was established by Hacı Girey, a Chinggisid prince, during the

¹ Halil İnalcık, “The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans,” *Archivum Ikonov* 35 (1979): 74-110, esp. 74; Victor Ostapchuk, “The Ottoman Black Sea Steppe Frontier and the Struggle for a New Order in Eastern Europe, 1648-1681,” *Turkish Studies Association Journal* (forthcoming); Victor Ostapchuk, “The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the face of the Cossack Naval Raids,” *Oriente Moderno* 20 (2001): 23-95.

² For the notion of “perilous frontier,” see Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989).

dissolution of the Golden Horde was taken under Ottoman protection in 1478 when Mengli Girey was installed on the Crimean throne with Ottoman help.³

Since the Chingissid origin of the Girey dynasty guaranteed it a very high status in traditional steppe politics, the Porte and the Crimean khan came to an understanding of mutual benefits that their alliance could produce in the steppes. Thus, realizing the significance of the Girey dynasty in the politics of the steppes, the Ottomans preferred to place the Crimean Khanate under Ottoman protection without changing its internal mechanism, which was able to handle the northern affairs on its own since it was still a formidable military power especially in the steppes where regular armies remained ineffective without regular supply lines and because of extreme weather conditions.⁴ For these reasons, the Ottomans did not eliminate the local ruling dynasty of the Gireys. By contrast, as known, in accordance with their traditional method of conquest, the Ottomans did not allow the local ruling dynasties in Moldavia and Wallachia to have a fullness of power or a degree of autonomy that they granted to the Crimean khans.⁵ After they became a part of the Ottoman system of vassalage, rulers (*voivodes*) of Moldavia and Wallachia were either directly appointed or had to be approved by Istanbul. Although the Ottomans sometimes approved the *voivodes* elected by the nobility of Moldavia and Wallachia, and sometimes directly appointed someone of their own choice, they did not let a single dynastical family to rule

³ Halil İnalçık, “Yeni vesikalara göre Kırım hanlığının Osmanlı tabiliğine girmesi ve ahidname meselesi,” *Belleten* 8 (1944): 185-229; Kefeli İbrahim bin Ali, *Tevarih-i Tatarhan ve Dağıstan ve Moskov ve Deşt-i Kıpçak ülkelerininindir*, ed. Cafer Seyit Kırmır (Pazarcık [Romania], n. p., 1933), 23; Akdes Nimet Kurat ed., *Topkapı sarayı müzesi arşivindeki Altın Ordu, Kırım ve Türkistan hanlarına ait yarlık ve bitikler* (İstanbul: Burhaneddin Matbaası, 1940), 87-89.

⁴ Victor Ostapchuk, “The Ottoman Black Sea Steppe Frontier.”

⁵ Halil İnalçık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103-29.

over Moldavia or Wallachia.⁶ Any noble or wealthy person could be appointed as a *voivode* by the sultan. On the other hand, although they were appointed by Istanbul, the Crimean khans were all members of the Chingissid Girey family. Moreover, unlike other vassals, the Crimean Khanate did not pay any yearly tribute to the Ottoman Porte.⁷ In fact, it was the Crimean khans who received gifts and money from the sultan in exchange for their military services during the Ottomans campaigns.

It was a reciprocally profitable relation—for the Ottomans, the khanate provided them with a strong proxy power in the north without committing their own resources, and for the Crimean Tatars, it rendered them the protection of a powerful empire with one of the strongest militaries in Europe and Asia. Yet, it was at the same time a reciprocally restrictive relation. While the Ottoman Empire prevented the Crimean Khanate from gaining too much strength fearing its ultimate independence, the Crimean khans did their best to limit the Ottoman influence and control in the north.

The Porte knew and feared that a possible Crimean independence would be disastrous in the north. Power holders in Istanbul who wanted to remove a khan and install another one that they supported made use of this fear in order to attain their goals. For example, mentioning the

⁶ Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2000), 344-47. Also see Viorel Panaite, “The Voivodes of the Danubian Principalities As Haracgüzarlar of the Ottoman Sultans,” in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Change*, ed. Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 59-79.

⁷ Ibid., 156. Although, Martin Broniewski, Polish envoy to the Crimean khan from claims that slaves, furs, birds, and salt sent by the Crimean Khan to the Ottoman sultan were a sort of annual tax, his argument does not hold up under scrutiny. Broniewski writes, “Odnakozh Khan ezhegodno otpravliaet k turetskomu Sultanu v vide dani plennikov oboego pola, mekha dorogie i obyknovennye, maslo, i sol’, kotoriu Tavrisheskii poluostrov v osobennosti izobiluet.” [Martin Broniewski], “Opisanie Kryma (Tartariae Descriptio) Martyna Bronevskogo,” trans. I. G. Shershenevich, *Zapiski Odesskago Obshchestva Istorii i Drevnostei* 6 (1867): 333-66, esp. 359; Maria Ivanics, “Enslavement, Slave Labour and the Treatment of Captives in the Crimean Khanate,” in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders*, ed. Geza David and Pal Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 197.

removal of Khan Sahib Girey (r. 1532-1551), Remmal Hoca, a contemporary Crimean chronicler, tells about rumours that were circulating in Istanbul among the officials. Remmal Hoca writes, “the sultan’s viziers say that the khan does not show even the slightest respect to the envoys of the Porte. If he unites his forces with the Nogays, no one can match him and resist.”⁸ Moreover, in order to contain the Crimean khan and his power base, the Ottoman governors of Kefe and Azak did not even hesitate to inform the Muscovite tsar about the khan’s plans for raids and campaigns in the north from time to time.⁹ The intention of the Ottomans was to prevent the Crimean khan from gaining a level of power that could threaten Ottoman interests. For example, instead of supporting the activities of Sahib Girey, who had succeeded in installing Sefa Girey as the khan of Kazan (r. 1524-1531, 1535-1546, and 1546-1549) and effectively occupying Astrakhan, the Porte planned to replace Sahib Girey, whom they thought to be too ambitious, with a more submissive candidate, and then to recover Kazan by supporting the new khan militarily against Muscovy.¹⁰ Challenged not only by the Muscovite tsar in its quest for the heritage of the Golden Horde, but also by the Ottomans, the Crimean Khanate could not expand its influence over the other parts of the former Golden Horde.

⁸ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han: Historie de Sahib Giray, Khan de Crimée de 1532 à 1551*, [with French translation by M. Le Roux], ed. Özalp Gökbilgin (Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1973), 115; Halil İnalçık, “Power Relations between Russia, the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature,” in *Turco-Tatar Past Soviet Present: Studies Presented to Alexandre Bennigsen*, ed. Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, and E. Wimbush (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 175-215, esp. 186-89.

⁹ Halil İnalçık, “The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry and the Don-Volga Canal (1569),” *Annales del’Universite d’Ankara* 1 (1947): 53, 55.

¹⁰ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 115-32; İnalçık, “Power Relations,” 188. Also see Halil İnalçık, “The Khan and the Tribal Aristocracy: The Crimean Khanate under Sahib Giray I,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (1979-1980): 445-66, esp. 461-66.

On the other hand, the khanate sought to prevent the Ottomans from taking daring measures against its rivals in the north.¹¹ For example, during the 1569 Astrakhan campaign the Crimean khan did his best to discourage the Ottoman troops and to persuade or frighten them into turning back, which led to the total failure of this campaign, according to the Ottoman chroniclers. Moreover, as we saw earlier, the Porte wanted to build several fortresses in the North Caucasus to secure its position in the region and make its claim of sovereignty a reality, especially in the 1580s and 1590s. Whenever the Ottomans requested the Crimean khan's input and opinions about these projects, the khan would be uncooperative. It was not because the khan thought that fortresses in the North Caucasus would be futile but because he must have known that Ottoman fortresses in the North Caucasus would be the start of encirclement of the khanate and increase the Ottoman control in the area.

Regardless of the bilateral relations between the Porte and the Crimean Khanate, the latter was a crucial player in securing a balance of power between Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy, which will be treated below. The Crimean Khanate also worked as an intermediary between the Porte and Muscovy thanks to Mengli Girey's efforts to establish diplomatic ties between the Ottoman sultan and the Muscovite tsar. The Muscovite envoys to the sultan first had to wait in Bahçesaray for the approval of the Crimean khan and only then were allowed to continue their journey to the Porte. As it was the case with the North Caucasian rulers, the Crimean khan expected the Ottoman sultan to observe his rights to deal with his own vassals.¹² This was due to the fact that the khan considered Muscovy as a tributary since Muscovy continued or had been forced to continue to pay a certain sum to the Tatars annually to buy

¹¹ İnalçık, "The Origin of the Ottoman-Russian Rivalry," 53.

¹² Ibid., 198.

peace.¹³ This payment was known as *haraç* or *tüş*, which indicated a vassal status, to the Crimeans. The Muscovites, on the other hand, described it as mere *pominki*, i.e., gifts.

The Crimean Khanate had a large degree of autonomy and was to a certain extent even allowed to follow its own foreign policy in the north, which was not always in conformity with Ottoman policies or interests in the region. In addition to the status of the khanate, the khan himself was very important in Ottoman protocol. He was a *Muslim* ruler of *Chinggisid* lineage. However, we see that the status of the Crimean khan in Ottoman protocol changed over time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, during the reign of Sahib Girey (r. 1532-1551), the Crimean khan was considered above the grand vizier but definitely below the sultan.¹⁴ When Sahib Girey joined the Ottoman army in Wallachia in 1538, he was met by the grand vizier and other viziers who dismounted from their horses and accompanied the khan to the presence of Süleyman I. The sultan and khan greeted each other on horses. According to Remmal Hoca and Ottoman chroniclers, although the khan desired to dismount in the presence of the sultan, Süleyman I did not let him to do so.¹⁵ However, as Hezarfen and Peçevi narrate, when Khan Gazi Girey II (r. 1588-1596) joined the Ottoman army in 1594 in Yanık, Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha met the khan on horseback without dismounting, which indicated equality of both in the hierarchy. Both Hazerfen and Peçevi record the rumours that the khan felt humiliated by the grand vizier's attitude.¹⁶ Peçevi writes, "Although the *serdar* (Sinan Pasha) is the

¹³ İnalçık, "Power Relations," 198-99.

¹⁴ Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhisü'l-beyan fî kavanin-i al-i Osman*, ed. Sevim İlgürel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998), 169.

¹⁵ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 29-31; Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhisü'l-beyan*, 169; İbrahim Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, ed. Fahri Derin and Vahit Çabuk (İstanbul: Enderun, 1980), 2:148-49.

¹⁶ Hazerfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhisü'l-beyan*, 169; Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:353-54.

representative of a great *padishah*, and is the grand vizier, Khan Gazi Girey is a *padishah* son of a *padishah* who mints his own coin and in whose name the *hütbe* has been read for four hundred years. It not befitting for the grand vizier to think that he is the khan's equal.”¹⁷

Although the place of the khan in Ottoman protocol changed over the time, he was always an important power in the eyes of the Porte. To illustrate, the khan might send a decree to an Ottoman province and demand a certain action. Thus, Khan Mehmed Girey IV (r. 1641-1644, 1654-1666) sent a decree to the *kadı* of İsmail concerning an office in this town on which the khan wished to impose one of his own men. When the office was given to someone else, the khan wrote to the *kadı* that the office should be given to his candidate; otherwise “you should know that I will ride there personally and will execute the current office holder and you.”¹⁸ It can be said that no other vassal or even viziers would dare to act in such an overtly imperious manner.

Despite a degree of internal instability stemming from its tribal constituencies, the Crimean Khanate was an established state compared to the Ukrainian and Russian Cossacks on the other side of the Black Sea frontier. Somewhat ironically, it was usually easier for the Ottomans to influence, even control it than it was for Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy to control their respective Cossacks. In steppe frontier zones, the Cossacks were, to a great extent, the equivalent of the Crimean Tatars for the two northern powers. In the second half of the sixteenth century they could practically at will raid the Crimean or Ottoman territories to the north of Black Sea. In case of Crimean or Nogay raids into Poland-Lithuania or Muscovy, the latter could

¹⁷ Peçevi, *Peçevi tarihi*, 2:149.

¹⁸ Naima Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Naima: Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fi hulasati ahbari'l-hafikayn*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), 2310.

retaliate by unleashing their Cossacks into Crimean and Ottoman lands. What made the Cossacks a formidable power against the Tatars and Nogays in the Black Sea steppes to be reckoned with was their organization and military tactics. Some of their tactics and survival skills in the harsh and risky steppe had originally been adapted from the Tatars. However, the Cossacks improved the steppe warfare tactics one level up thanks to their mastery of firearms.

As for the Muscovites, by using the Cossacks effectively they were able to fulfill their aim of incorporating the frontier zones and began colonizing the southern steppes in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries despite their sometimes uneasy relations with their Cossacks. Similar to the relationship between the Ottomans and the Crimeans, there was a special understanding of rights and responsibilities between the Cossack hosts and Muscovy. Accordingly, no person who had been accepted into a Cossack host was subject to Muscovite jurisdiction. Even if he was a fugitive or criminal, as soon as he was made a member, Muscovite officials had no right to claim anything.¹⁹ Obviously, the Muscovites must have figured that services rendered by the Cossacks on the steppe frontier were much more important than following and apprehending fugitives.²⁰ The Cossacks inhabiting the southern steppes of Muscovy and lands in the North Caucasus were militarized settlers. Namely, they were able to defend themselves and even attack local people and polities in their vicinity simply because they carried adequate weapons and were organized

¹⁹ Grigorii Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v tsarstvovanie Aleksieia Mikhailovicha*, 4th edition (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Imperatorskoi Arkheograficheskoi Kommissii, 1906), 135.

²⁰ Brian James Boeck, "Containment vs. Colonization: Muscovite Approaches to Settling the Steppe," in *Peopling The Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (New York: Routledge, 2007), 43.

as military societies.²¹ In fact, they proved to be the cheapest and most effective way of colonizing the steppes for Muscovy.²²

When they settled in uninhabited areas in the steppes, the Cossacks came into contact with local populations and enabled the influx of Slavic settlers.²³ As for the North Caucasus, we know that Greben and Terek Cossacks became an integral part of this region where they established their hosts and most of the time interacted with the other societies.²⁴ Their social structure which was organized into military fraternities and their idea of *vol'nost'* (freedom) were in conformity with the North Caucasus societies and polities. Compared to the Crimean Tatars, who considered the North Caucasus as a source of slaves and tribute and themselves as the masters of the region, the Cossacks were more successful in interacting with the local populations in a symbiotic way. The Cossacks intermarried and had neighbourly relations with the local North Caucasus societies, promoting the Muscovite interests within their locality in a way that Muscovy could not possibly do with its own military, political, or economic means.

As stated earlier, the most important contribution of the Cossacks to Muscovy's ambitions was that they provided a military power that Muscovy itself would not be able to muster in the steppe regions and an opportunity to colonize the mostly uncultivated and fertile

²¹ Thomas Barrett, *At the Edge of the Empire: The Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier, 1700-1860* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 3-25.

²² Boeck, "Containment vs. Colonization," 43; Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Steppe: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 23-24.

²³ Brian James Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13-27; Brian James Boeck, "Shifting Boundaries on the Don Steppe Frontier: Cossacks, Empires and Nomads to 1739" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002); Matthew P. Romaniello "Grant, Settle, Negotiate: Military Servitors in the Middle Volga Region," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (New York: Routledge, 2007), 61-77.

²⁴ S. A. Kozlov, *Kavkaz v sud'bakh kazachestva* (St. Petersburg: Kol'na, 1996), 8-15.

areas in the frontier zones. Being outlawed people from Muscovy, Lithuania-Poland, and from other states, the Cossacks had to settle in these uninhabited frontier zones. Exactly for the same reason, it was not easy to control them in the steppe frontier zone as they did not always obey the Muscovite tsar and could follow their own policies.²⁵

The relationship and the organic tie between Muscovy and various hosts of Cossacks were not the same at all times. There were periods of antagonisms and enmity as well. For example, Tsar Boris Godunov promoted both the interests of the ruling elite and those of the suppressed peasantry and lower classes in the first years of the seventeenth century, which brought about many uprisings in the country.²⁶ As a result, many peasants and serfs made their way to the Cossack host on the Don, which led Tsar Godunov to take repressive measures. On their part, the Cossacks had already been dissatisfied with the Muscovite policies, especially of building a network of fortresses along the southern border. They considered these fortresses a breach to their manoeuvrability and freedom in the steppes comparable to Crimean insecurity at Ottoman nearly encroachments mentioned above. For these reasons, during Godunov's reign, the Cossacks did not hesitate to raid Muscovite lands and subjects.²⁷ Eventually, the Muscovite officials decided to tighten the control over the Cossacks by imposing certain restrictions on imports to the Cossack hosts. Accordingly, sale of gun powder and foodstuff to the Cossacks was

²⁵ Barrett, *At the Edge of the Empire*, 19.

²⁶ V. I. Koretskii, *Formirovanie krepostnogo prava i pervaiia krestianskaia voina Rossii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 365; Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 58-59.

²⁷ A. P. Pavlov, "Fedor Ivanovich and Boris Godunov (1584-1605)," in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 1, *From Early Rus' to 1689*, ed. Maureen Perrie, D. C. B. Lieven, and Ronald Grigor Suny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283.

prohibited and the Cossacks were not allowed into any town,²⁸ to which the Cossacks responded by attacking the Muscovite merchants and settlements.²⁹ However, in spite of these periods of antagonisms, existence of the Cossacks in the steppes was a huge and indispensable advantage for Muscovy and Muscovite officials made good use of their abilities.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that as proxy forces of two imperial powers bordering the Black Sea steppes, the Cossacks and the Crimean Tatars had a certain code of conduct for plundering and raiding activities. Warfare and raiding activities between the Crimean Tatars and Cossacks co-existed with periods of peace and amicable relations. Thus, the objective of warfare in the steppes through the Crimean Tatar or Cossack prism was to “procure resources” rather than annihilate the adversary. The prominent Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky refers to this phenomenon from the Cossack perspective as a “border sport.”³⁰ On the other hand, from the perspective of the imperial powers, the aim was to disturb the other power’s order and subjects settled in close proximity to the frontier zones.³¹

Another important point about using clients in the frontier zones was the notion of “plausible deniability.” Accordingly, conflicts between the clients in the steppe zone were not allowed to damage the relations between imperial powers.³² Thus, the imperial powers preferred to have amicable relations with one another while their clients in the steppes carried out raiding

²⁸ A. L. Stanislavskii, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii XVII v.: Kazachestvo na perelome istorii* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1990), 17-20; Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 21.

²⁹ Pavlov, “Fedor Ivanovich and Boris Godunov,” 283.

³⁰ Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 46; Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, vol. 7, *The Cossack Age to 1625*, trans. Bohdan Struminski, ed. Serhii Plokhyy and Frank E. Sysyn (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1999), 62-64.

³¹ Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 46.

³² *Ibid.*, 22-26.

and plundering, which were to be protested but not seen as reason for a full-scale campaign. Just as the Ottomans punished the Cossacks when they had the chance, the Muscovites had the perfect right to punish the Crimean Tatars if they could.³³

Despite this similarity in the policies of the Porte and Muscovy regarding the method of using clients on the steppe frontier, there was an important difference between Ottoman and Muscovite strategies. Besides using the Cossacks, the Muscovites did not hesitate to directly interfere in steppe affairs with their own military when international conjuncture allowed it. In addition to this, they constructed networks of fortresses on their southern steppe frontier.³⁴ The system of fortresses was the backbone of Muscovite strategy. Initially, fortresses were built to protect the Muscovite subjects from nomadic raids. As Muscovy strengthened its position among the post-Golden Horde polities and began its imperial career, the Muscovite officials realized the value of fortresses for dealing with the nomadic societies in the steppes. These lines of fortresses in the southern frontier zone provided Muscovy with the much needed security and a military footing for control and further expansion.³⁵ Muscovite settlers were able to engage in agriculture and establish villages behind those lines of defences. As new villages and towns around fortresses were established, these defence lines showed a trend to move further south so that the

³³ C. Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 27. Russian/Soviet historians were traditionally unable to distinguish between Crimean Tatar aggression and Ottoman defensiveness. Examples of such works are N. A. Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1958); N. A. Smirnov, *Rossia i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv.*, Uchenye zapiski, vyp. 94 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Gosudarsvennogo Universiteta, 1946); and A. A. Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s tatarami v pervoi polovine XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1948).

³⁴ V. V. Kargalov, *Na granitsakh stoiat' krepko!: Velikaia Rus' i Dikoe Pole: Protivostoianie XIII-XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Russkaia panorama, 1998), 301-20.

³⁵ Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 40.

Muscovite subjects would be protected from the nomadic raids.³⁶ Namely, for Muscovites, securing an area on their southern frontier was associated creating a sphere of influence beyond the area in question and gradually expanding when there was an opportunity.

This was, in fact, a method of direct control and colonization of the steppes, which gradually enlarged Muscovite territory. Muscovy's neighbours were well aware of this strategy in the sixteenth century. Although, in theory, these fortresses were at times constructed to protect clients of Muscovy from their enemies, the fact that they were filled with Muscovite *strel'tsy* and Cossacks made them an effective method of direct control and dominance over local rulers and their peoples by Muscovy. When the Muscovite effort to built fortresses in the southern steppes and in the North Caucasus was at its peak in the late 1580s and early 1590s, Crimean Khan Gazi Girey II (r. 1588-1597, 1597-1607) told to the Muscovite envoy at his court, "Your ruler thus wishes to do as he did with Kazan: at first he established a town (fortress) close by, then seized Kazan; but the Crimea is not Kazan, in the Crimea there are many hands and eyes; it will be necessary for your ruler to go beyond the town to the very heart of Crimea."³⁷ As it is understood from these words, gradual but effective Muscovite colonization of the Black Sea steppes through networks of fortresses had been known by the other powers in the region. However, these powers were not able to force Muscovy to abandon its effective strategy. This pattern would remain

³⁶ Ibid., 40; Kargalov, *Na granitsakh*, 301-20.

³⁷ "Vash gosudar' takzhe khochet sdelat' kak nad Kazan'yu snachala gorod blizko postavil a potom i Kazan' vzyal no Krym ne Kazan' u Kryma mnogo ruk i glaz gosudaryu vashemu nadobno budet idti mimo gorodov v seredku." S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sotsial'no-economicheskoi Literatury, 1960), 7:265; English translation is given in Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism*, 111; Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 17.

quite the same throughout the centuries of Muscovite and Russian imperial hegemony in the steppes and specifically in the North Caucasus.³⁸

The role played by local governors of frontier towns and cities of the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy was another similarity in terms of imperial policies. Kefe and Azak in the north of the Black and Azov Seas respectively were significant components of Ottoman northern policy. Local rulers of the North Caucasus and Nogay chiefs were given salaries and controlled by these governors. Their main duty within the Ottoman system was to inform the Porte about the developments in the north which also included the North Caucasus. The governors of Kefe and Azak were specifically responsible for the Adyghe lands and tried to draw local Adyghe rulers to the Ottoman side by luring them with salaries and titles. Kefe was the Porte's control center and the main node for information with regards to the Crimean Khanate and North Caucasus affairs. It was extremely important for containing the Crimean Khanate and preventing it from gaining too much strength. In case of turmoil or rise of an anti-Ottoman party in Crimea, Kefe acted as a safe haven for pro-Ottoman khans and parties. However, these governors sometimes acted independently of the Porte and without consulting the Crimean khan and carried on their business with the local peoples of the Black Sea steppes or of the North Caucasus.³⁹

A similar role on the Muscovite side was played by the governors of Astrakhan and Terek. Just like Kefe was a city and the commercial hub for the Crimea and north western Caucasus, Astrakhan was a city and the commercial hub for the lower Volga, North Caucasus, and the Greater Nogays. Astrakhan had a stone fortress where a large number of troops were

³⁸ Michael Khodarkovsky, "Of Christianity, Enlightenment, and Colonialism: Russia in the North Caucasus, 1550-1800," *The Journal of Modern History* 71 (1999): 395.

³⁹ For Kefe see Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe: 1475-1600* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000); for Azak and "Azovskie liudi" see Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva*, 15-43.

stationed. Some local rulers from the North Caucasus and Nogay chiefs were given salaries and gifts from this city. Since its annexation by Muscovy in 1556, the city of Astrakhan was the center of operations for Muscovite designs over the North Caucasus and the Greater Nogay Horde.⁴⁰ In 1588, the Terek town was constructed and as of 1590, it became the center of operations for the North Caucasus replacing Astrakhan.⁴¹ Astrakhan, however, was still the main center for the Greater Nogays. In this regard, Terek town functioned just as Azak did for the Ottoman Porte. Namely, in the seventeenth century, Azak would be the main center for the Ottomans regarding their North Caucasus affairs.

At this point, we should mention another element of Ottoman northern policy which was a component of the balance of power between the northern states and the Crimean Khanate. The main objective of the idea of balance of power within a larger Ottoman northern policy was to preserve the balance between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy by manipulating their enmities. The Ottoman Porte considered the northern states to be second-rate powers with which its vassal, the Crimean khan, could deal. The fact that Istanbul handled Muscovite affairs through the Crimean khan and Kefe and did not consider the Muscovite tsar or Polish king equal in status to other European rulers such as the Habsburg emperors is a proof of this.⁴² The attitude of the Ottomans toward the Muscovite tsar is especially visible in their correspondence. The diplomatic language in the imperial letters sent to the tsar from the Porte

⁴⁰ V. V. Ishin and I. V. Toropitsyn, eds., *Astrakhanskii krai v istorii Rossii XVI-XXI vv.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Astrakhan: Astrakhanskii Universitet, 2007), 12-20.

⁴¹ E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh svyazi s Rossiei: Vtoraia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1963), 284; Smirnov, *Rossiia i Turtsiia*, 138.

⁴² Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 57-58; İnalçık, "Power Relations," 175-215; Halil İnalçık, "Struggle for East-European Empire, The Crimean Khanate, Ottomans and the Rise of the Russian Empire," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 21 (1982): 1-16.

indicated the lower status of the Muscovite tsar. For example, in a letter dated 1584 the sultan “ordered” the tsar to control the Cossacks.⁴³ The language of the letters sent to the Polish crown was no different.⁴⁴ The Porte continued to manipulate the enmities between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania throughout the seventeenth century as well. For example, when the Polish envoys visited Istanbul following their ratification of the Treaty of Andrusovo in 1667 that envisaged friendly relations between Muscovy and the Commonwealth, the envoys were threatened, “If you continue to be at peace with the Muscovite infidels and drop your sword, you will not be protected by us.”⁴⁵ In short, the Porte did not want to see peaceful relations between Poland and Muscovy that could negatively affect the status quo in the north and the balance of power between them and the Crimean Khanate.

However, Muscovite take-over of Kazan and Astrakhan and their willingness to expand further in the Black Sea steppes and the North Caucasus already disturbed the balance in the north in the second half of the sixteenth century. The Ottoman Porte was concerned and decided to take action. When faced with the Ottoman threat, instead of confronting the Ottomans directly the Muscovite officials initiated their policy of avoidance of conflict with the Ottoman Porte as of the second half of the sixteenth century. The main reason was obviously Realpolitik. Namely, the Ottoman Empire was more powerful than Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, Muscovy did not want to risk its newly acquired territories in the southern frontier by starting a war with the Porte in which it would face both the Crimean forces and

⁴³ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri mühimme defteri* (henceforth MD) 58, no. 203.

⁴⁴ See Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th-18th Century): An Annotated Edition of Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) for a collection of imperial letters sent to the Polish king.

⁴⁵ Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Aga, *Silahdar tarihi*, ed. Ahmed Refik (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1928), 1:472.

regular armies of the Ottomans.⁴⁶ It should be also added that Muscovy differentiated between the Ottoman Empire and its vassals in the application of this policy and did not avoid direct conflict with Crimean Khanate or Shamkhalat of Daghestan, which were Ottoman vassals in our period.⁴⁷

This policy of Muscovy lasted in its southern frontier until 1678 when the Muscovite forces had to confront the Ottoman army in Ukraine during the siege of Chyhyryn. The Muscovites at that time had to take their stance because they faced the danger of losing Ukraine and the Zaporozhian Cossacks to a possible united Hetmanate under Ottoman sovereignty, which had a potential of becoming another Crimean Khanate for Muscovy, only closer to its heartlands. Before that date, the Muscovite officials fervently avoided any conflict with the Ottoman Empire. Even in 1637 when the Don and Zaporozhian Cossacks wrested Azak from the Ottomans and offered it to Muscovy, the Muscovite tsar, still being aware of his state's limited power against the Ottomans, refused to take the city or even provide aid for the Cossacks.⁴⁸ As a result in 1642 the Cossacks were forced to abandon Azak and allow the Ottomans to retake it. This happened, despite the fact that the *zemskii sobor* in Moscow urged the tsar to take over Azak. The gentry of *zemskii sobor* said, "We must hold on to Azov because as soon as we secure it the wars with the Tatars will cease...If Azov belongs to the Sovereign, the Mountain Circassians, Temriuk, Kzhen, Besneneev and Asin tribes will serve the sovereign and every

⁴⁶ Ishin and Toropitsyn, eds., *Astrakhanskii krai v istorii Rossii*, 14; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 194-95; Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, 3:604.

⁴⁷ Unlike Russian and Soviet historians who were unable to separate Ottoman and Crimean foreign policies vis-à-vis Muscovy, grouping them under "Turko-Tatar aggression," the tsardom was well aware of the difference. While its military reacted to Tatars incursions, Muscovy also complained about them to the Ottomans.

⁴⁸ Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva*, 308-12.

Nogay will wander off from Astrakhan to the neighbourhood of Azov.”⁴⁹ These appeals, however, did not alter the Muscovite policy and the tsar wrote to the sultan, “You, our brother, should not be angry that the Cossacks killed [your] ambassador and seized Azov. They acted without our command and illegally and we will not defend these brigands and we do not want to have any quarrel with you on their account even if you order all of these brigands to be killed.”⁵⁰

Apart from aforementioned framework and similarities in Ottoman and Muscovite policies, they differed in the steppes in regards to two main areas. One of them was what Chantal Lemerancier-Quelquejay calls co-optation strategy, an important element of Muscovite policy on its southern frontier. Muscovite co-optation strategy was designed to incorporate native elites into the Muscovite system. Principles of this strategy were formulated based on the long-lasting and largely successful Muscovite practice of dealing with the Khanate of Kazan and the Nogay Horde. It envisaged that a certain ruler, social group or an entire tribe be granted economic and political advantages over the others and thus expected to act in the interest of Muscovy.⁵¹ Co-optation might include religious conversion, cultural assimilation, and even marital ties with the Muscovite tsar depending on the status of the elites or peoples co-opted.

The co-optation strategy of Muscovy went hand in hand with its methods to delegate power to one of the rulers of the people or polity to be co-opted and deal with other chiefs through him. This policy was related to the Muscovite practice of designating a Chinggisid prince over others in the steppes when the Muscovites co-opted Turkic people and polities.

⁴⁹ Solov’ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, 5:220.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 216.

⁵¹ Chantal Lemerancier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London: C. Hurst, 1992), 18.

Lemercier-Quelquejay argues that this policy brought about what she calls “Chinggisid syndrome.” Accordingly, the Muscovite officials had a tendency to designate one chief as the supreme ruler regardless of the social and political structures of peoples they encountered.⁵² Michael Khodarkovsky describes this Muscovite method as finding “a khan or a search for central authority.”⁵³ In their relations with the post-Golden Horde polities in eastern and southern frontiers, Muscovy implemented the same creating a supreme ruler strategy by using Chinggisid nobility to secure the loyalty of their people. The strategy produced very favourable results when applied to the Turco-Mongolian steppe societies which never questioned decision of their Chinggisid rulers. Thus, it was a productive method with Tatar nobilities of Kazan and Astrakhan, and with beys of Nogays.⁵⁴ Compared to this, the Ottoman Porte in its dealings with the Nogays mirzas, Circassians chiefs, and Daghestani rulers preferred to manipulate each chief independently. In fact, it was rather difficult for the Porte to play the “Chinggisid card” due to the fact that Crimean khans were Ottoman vassals. The khan was a Chinggisid and claimed the heritage of the Golden Horde. As such he demanded ultimate submission or destruction of other steppe rulers, which did not leave any room for manoeuvre for the Porte to cement a separate alliance with the Nogays or other steppe powers. The Crimean khan expected that the Porte would let him to deal with such peoples and the Ottomans respected this, at least before their active involvement in the North Caucasus affairs.

Apart from elites being co-opted, significantly the commoners were also targeted by the Muscovite strategy, that is, by finding way to make them dependent on the tsardom and thereby

⁵² Ibid., 20.

⁵³ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 30.

⁵⁴ Lemercier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” 20.

eventually subjugate them. The Muscovite tsar accepted converts and renegades from local Muslim or pagan rulers on the condition that they would settle in the Muscovite realm.⁵⁵ The Muscovite government provided such people with strong incentives and generous rewards. Although this created conflicts between local rulers and the Muscovite officials, most of the time complaints by local rulers remained unanswered and Muscovy took advantage of this situation by gradually depriving the local rulers of their subjects.⁵⁶

The co-optation policy was very effective with the Nogays, for example.⁵⁷ In fact, the ultimate success of Muscovy in annexing the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates was due to its ability to manipulate the Nogays who were roaming the lands along the Volga River. Although disillusioned once they realized their increasing dependency on Muscovy and unfulfilled promises of the tsar, the Nogays were not able to regain their power and remained a valuable vassal and auxiliary force of Muscovy until the arrival of the Kalmyks in the lower Volga region in the mid-seventeenth century. This was because not only the Nogay *mirzas* but also the whole nation was co-opted in a way that they were completely reliant on Muscovy for their economic and political survival.⁵⁸ It should be said at this point that the Ottoman Porte also tried to attract the Nogays who had the potential to prevent the Muscovite take-over of the khanates of Kazan

⁵⁵ Khodarkovsky, "Of Christianity, Enlightenment," 428. Renegades from Islam would have no other choice as Islamic law dictates that punishment for a Muslim converting to any other religion is execution.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 428.

⁵⁷ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 100-25.

⁵⁸ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 22. In the first half of the sixteenth century the Nogays were supplying massive amounts of horses to the Muscovites. Edward Keenan points out that the number horses sold to Muscovy was as high as 30-40 thousand a year. While the Nogays wanted to continue this trade and in general a symbiotic relationship, based on mutual noninterference, Muscovy respected this only until the second half of the sixteenth century. Thereupon, as Keenan also stresses, they were ready to confront and subdue the Nogays. See Edward Keenan, "Muscovy and Kazan: Some Introductory Remarks on the Patterns of Steppe Diplomacy," *Slavic Studies* 26 (1976): 548-58, esp. 552.

and Astrakhan.⁵⁹ Apart from the distance of the region from Ottoman centers, the main reason for Porte's failure was the Crimean khan's poor relations with the Nogays. Except for several occasions, the Crimean khan did not try to reconcile with them⁶⁰ and even struggled with the Nogays for the control of their pastures in order to contain them. Seeing the effective power of the Nogays, in 1615 even the Safavid shah tried to establish an alliance with them against the Ottoman presence and dominance in Daghestan.⁶¹ However, at the end it was Muscovy's clever policy that won the most of the Nogays.

It has already been said that the Muscovite policy was coherent.⁶² There were several tools used by the Muscovite officials within the framework of their co-optation policy in the sixteenth century. These were obtaining a pledge of allegiance (*shert'*), taking of hostages (*amanat*), and gifts and annuities (*pominki* and *zhalovanie*).⁶³ The Muscovite envoys negotiating treaties or alliances with local rulers in the southern frontiers always acted within the limits of instructions given to them with regards to the prescribed rituals of the *shert'*, receiving hostages, and distributing presents and annuities for local rulers. Every procedure was prescribed ahead of time in the centre—even sentences that envoys would use or manner in which they would act was written down by Muscovite officials in Moscow.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ V. V. Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2002), 243-61.

⁶⁰ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 127.

⁶¹ Novosel'skii, *Borba Moskovskogo gosudarstva*, 93.

⁶² Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 43.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 51-68.

⁶⁴ Many examples of "instructions" given to the Muscovite envoys from can be seen in *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889).

From the Muscovite perspective, *shert'*, a word of Arabic origin Muscovite chancellery borrowed from the Tatars, denoted a kind of document that a willing local chief had to sign indicating his loyalty to the Muscovite tsar.⁶⁵ Originally a Chinggisid practice called *möchälgä*, these sorts of binding pledges in the form of a document were widely used in post-Chinggisid states.⁶⁶ The practice was also adopted by non-Chinggisid states such as Safavid Iran⁶⁷ or Tsardom of Muscovy established in lands once ruled by the Chinggisids. The *shert'* remained a part of Muscovite diplomatic practice into the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ For the Muscovites, signing of *shert'* went hand in hand with the payments in form of gifts made to local rulers by the tsar. This was the pivotal element of the whole clientage system of Muscovy. Gifts and allowances were used to keep local rulers loyal to the Muscovite tsar. Muscovite officials were very consistent and insistent upon the oath of alliance and considered the *shert'* as a document of submission by local steppe rulers. However, most local rulers regarded the *shert'* as a military league between them and one of the potential allies.⁶⁹ For the Muscovite officials, the *shert'* process was a reflection of Muscovy's own image of overlordship to the local rulers in its southern frontiers. On the one hand, the tsar of the centralized and "civilized" "Third Rome" was benevolent and bestowing over the local peoples in exchange for their submission and loyalty to him. On the other hand, local rulers were content to receive protection against their enemies,

⁶⁵ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 51.

⁶⁶ Maria Subtelny, "The Binding Pledge (*möchälgä*): A Chinggisid Practice and Its Survival in Safavid Iran," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 9-30.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁸ F. Sergeev, *Formirovanie russkogo diplomaticheskogo iazyka* (Lviv: Vyshchia shkola, 1978), 25.

⁶⁹ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 51-56, 69-75.

money, and gifts in exchange for their military “alliance.” Most of the time, they did not imagine their relation with the tsar as submission to Muscovy.⁷⁰

Muscovite officials also required that the local ruler submit one of his sons or relatives or retinue members as surety, or *amanat*. Hostages from the North Caucasus chiefs and Nogays were usually kept in Astrakhan or Terek under the supervision of the governor with certain allowance per month.⁷¹ Hostages were taken in order to secure the loyalty of local rulers. In case of a threat to the Muscovite interests, the hostage could be killed or used against the local ruler, especially if the hostage was a son of the local ruler. The Muscovites were not flexible with regard to taking hostages and they always demanded one but they were laxer in terms of who the hostage would be. Although they preferred a son of the local ruler, depending on the situation, they could be content with a relative of the ruler or a noble. Most hostages in Astrakhan or Terek were treated badly.⁷² Moreover, as we understand from the sources, a hostage did not necessarily secure the loyalty of the local rulers on the southern frontier. It is not only because the hostage held by the Muscovites could be sacrificed for the interests of local rulers⁷³ but also because the hostage could be from one clan of a broader society and warriors belonging to other clans might not care about the one held by the Muscovites.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Michael Khodarkovsky, “Colonial Frontiers in Eighteenth Century Russia: From the North Caucasus to Central Asia,” in *Extending the Borders of Russian History*, ed. Marsha Siefert (New York: Central European University Press, 2003), 140. See also Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 69-75.

⁷¹ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 55-69.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷³ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 148-49.

⁷⁴ Evliya Çelebi mentions that Kalmyks raided Terek although there was a Kalmyk hostage in the city. When he asked the Muscovites how these Kalmyks dared to do this, the reply was that the hostage was from another Kalmyk clan and the raiding party had no hostages in the city. Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi seyahatnamesi*, vol. 7, ed. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman, and Robert Dankoff (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 308.

The Muscovite presents and annuities (*pominki* and *zhalovanie*) were also used to prevent steppe powers such as the Crimean Tatars or some of the Nogays from raiding Muscovite borderlands. Moreover, by giving presents and annuities, Muscovy was making those steppe polities more and more economically dependent. It should be remembered that except the northwestern, Adyghe part, Ottoman offers in terms of presents and annuities in the North Caucasus were not as generous as Muscovite offers. As we saw in Chapter 2, this changed only as of the 1570s.

As explained above, the clientage system was the only effective system for imperial powers with regular armies to operate in the steppe lands. The Muscovite clientage system was also well-defined. By co-opting local elites through aforementioned strategies, the Muscovites were creating a network of vassals and client polities in the southern frontiers. The network of clients in the steppes was manipulated very strategically by the Muscovites. However, in the North Caucasus it would not work as intended.

In addition to these, the Muscovite conquests of new lands show us a certain pattern in terms of dealing with the local population, including assimilation policies. In general, newly conquered areas could be subject to mass expulsion of some local elements such as tribes or groups that Muscovy considered enemies and found dangerous for its further expansion and eventual annexation of the area. Those people were expelled from their native lands and were, most of the time, re-settled in other parts of the Muscovite territories. In their place, Muscovite population and elites were settled in these newly conquered regions. To illustrate, the city of Kazan and its surroundings was transformed only in several years from a Tatar city into a proper Muscovite city, in which Muscovite nobles and Slavic population were majority of the

population.⁷⁵ In the same way, native Tatar population of Astrakhan was deported to the surrounding areas and Muscovite population was settled in the city (fortress) of Astrakhan, making it another proper Muscovite city in which majority of the population was Slavic. Therefore, expulsion and, later in the forthcoming centuries, deportation were also used as a component of the Muscovite policy in the steppe frontier.

This policy could even be applied to the foreign elements that were co-opted peacefully. The Nogays had controlled an area that covered most of the lower Volga and Yaik Rivers and steppes around those rivers.⁷⁶ As we understand from the Muscovite sources, the Nogays always complained that they were losing their rivers and lands to the Muscovite settlers and were not allowed to use some of their previous pastures. Slowly but gradually those lands that belonged to the Nogays who were loyal to the tsar were transformed into properly administered Muscovite territories or districts where Muscovite fortresses were built, soldiers were stationed, and Slavic peasants settled and engaged in agriculture. On the contrary, the Ottomans tried to keep the local populations in their own lands in the northern borderlands. The Ottoman Porte sent orders to the governors of Azak and Kefe and to the Crimean khan regarding the Circassian population that tried to flee their lands due to the Ottoman taxation.⁷⁷ As far as the Porte was concerned, keeping the local population in their own lands and registering them for taxation was preferable to deporting and replacing them with Muslim or Turkish population.

⁷⁵ M. K. Liubavskii, *Obzor istorii russkoi kolonizatsii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1996), 246-47; Janet Martin, "The Novokshcheny of Novgorod: Assimilation in the Sixteenth Century," *Central Asian Survey* 9 (1990): 13-38; AYTEK NAMITOK, "The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia," *Caucasian Review* 2 (1956): 17-28.

⁷⁶ Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordy*, 216-23.

⁷⁷ E.g., MD 12, nos. 534, 535; MD 14, nos. 1543, 1544.

In general in the beginning of the sixteenth century until the emergence of a mature Ottoman policy in the north and specifically in the North Caucasus, the Muscovite officials proved to be better in steppe politics than the Crimean khan or the Ottomans due to their aforementioned methods and strategies. Muscovite methods and strategies were more effective, which enabled them to expand in the steppe frontier at the expense of the Crimean Khanate in a short time. During this time period, they also cleverly avoided provoking the Ottoman Porte.

4.2. Imperial Policies and the North Caucasus: Beginnings of the Rivalry in the Borderlands

4.2.1. Reflections on Ottoman Northern Policy in the North Caucasus

In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire applied a “carrot and stick” policy in the North Caucasus. The “carrot” part (*istimalet*) of it was embodied by the *sancak* (province), and after 1569, *eyalet* (governor-generalship) of Kefe, and the “stick” part by the Crimean Khanate. We should recall that the Crimean khans were considered nominal rulers of the entire North Caucasus. One of the methods that Crimean khans used in the North Caucasus involved institution of the *atalık*, which acted as an indicator of the degree of sovereignty of the khans over the region. The *atalık* institution involved giving the children of Crimean khans, *mirzas*, and *beys*, usually at the age of two or three, to a noble Circassian family to be raised until the age of fifteen or sixteen. *Atalık* children lived with their host families and learned horse riding, wrestling, swordsmanship, and other warrior techniques. They were a constant bond between the Crimean royal or noble families and Circassian noble host families and contributed to creating a sense of alliance and partnership.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Ali Barut, “Kırım Hanlığı ile kuzey-batı Kafkasya ilişkilerinde Atalık müessesesinin yeri,” *Emel* 219 (1997): 113-21.

Although traditions such as *atalık* helped the Crimeans establish friendly relations with North Caucasus peoples, quite often there were conflicts that led to punitive raids by the Crimeans. The North Caucasus was economically significant for the khanate as it was an important source of slaves obtained either through raids or tributes. Crimean Tatars raided North Caucasus territories especially the Adyghe lands and Kabarda in their quest for slaves and booty.⁷⁹ For the khanate, Circassians were subjects who had to pay tribute to Bahçesaray. This tribute most of the time consisted of slaves and, whenever it was not received, the Crimean Tatars could plunder the Circassian lands.

Until the Ottomans began to employ Kefe as their base to gain influence among peoples of the North Caucasus, the Crimean Tatars freely raided and pillaged their lands. That is why the spread of Islam among the Christian and animist Circassians accelerated only after the direct Ottoman involvement in the region. Since the local peoples of the North Caucasus were an important source of slaves for the Crimean Tatars, the khan would not want to lose such a source by having them become fellow Muslims, which would rule them out as objects of Crimean slaving raids. With the Ottoman involvement in the region in the second half of the sixteenth century, we see that the number of Muslim tribes or rulers gradually increased. As such, the situation began to change in the sixteenth century, first for the Adyghe Circassian tribes, especially the Janneys.

⁷⁹ Presumably, half of the slaves in the Crimean Khanate in 1529 were of Circassian origin, and the other half were Slavic. Alan Fisher, "The Ottoman Crimea in the Sixteenth Century," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1 (1981): 135-70. Moreover, Circassian slaves were favored by the Ottoman elites. Gelibolu Mustafa Ali states that Circassian and Abaza slaves can be trained well and they are all brave and that Circassians and Croats are of good race. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve meva 'idi'n-nefais fi-kava 'idi'l-mecalis*, ed. Mehmet Şeker (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 117-19; Alan Fisher, "Chattel Slavery in the Ottoman Empire," *Slavery and Abolition* 1 (1980): 25-45, esp. 44-45.

Slavery in the North Caucasus is a fruitful area of research that gives clues regarding some other questions of Ottoman history as well. It also helps us understand the aforesaid “carrot and stick” approach of the Ottomans in the region. Remmal Hoca gives a very good example of this approach. In 1539, Khan Sahib Girey organized a raid of the Janey Circassians, who failed to keep their promise to defend the Ottoman territories from incursions of neighbouring tribes. The Ottomans had granted the Janey chief, Kansavuk, a gold-headed banner (*altun başlu sancak*), salary, and other symbols of investiture in exchange for his promise to help make Ottoman possessions more secure and protect Muslims in and around his lands. He had also been given the title of *sancakbey*. When Kansavuk came to the presence of Sahib Girey to ask for forgiveness, the khan said, “Since you have that many [15,000] soldiers, the sultan granted you this golden banner. You became a guarantor so that you would protect Taman from enemies. You promised that if someone lost their sheep you would give them a bull...But you cannot protect the island [i.e., peninsula of Taman] from a few thieves who oppressed Muslims.”⁸⁰ In another instance, Remmal Hoca records that as soon as the khan was informed by the governor of Kefe that the Janey Circassians were still not paying their dues and attacked Muslims in Taman, he said that he had been waiting for an opportunity to raid those lands.⁸¹

There are some points that need to be stressed in this connection. First, the main objective of the Ottomans was to protect their territorial possessions from raids by these “unruly” peoples. That is why the Ottoman officials began to grant banners and diplomas of investiture to some of the tribal leaders in the North Caucasus. They did not plan to annex those territories but rather wanted to keep them under control and possibly convert the Christian and especially animist

⁸⁰ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, 39.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

Circassians to Islam to secure their loyalty. Second, Kefe and Azak were the centers of information and headquarters of Ottoman involvement in the North Caucasus in the sixteenth century with a policy of *istimalet*, i.e. reconciliation. Third, the Crimean Khanate was used for punishing local peoples if the policy of *istimalet* did not work out as planned.

Istanbul naturally expected loyalty from North Caucasus rulers especially when they were on the Porte's payroll. Beyond that, some Circassian chiefs were assigned duties in exchange for salaries paid to them. *Mühimme* documents show that some of these chiefs and their men were stationed in Azak or were actively responsible for helping with the defence of Ottoman possessions in the north of the Black Sea.⁸² In times of war, such services rendered by the local rulers in the North Caucasus were extremely valuable. During the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1578-1590, the Porte specifically ordered Kefe *Nazırı* Mehmed and *Müteferrika* Bekir to make sure that salaries of Circassian rulers were paid on time and in full.⁸³

An imperial order dated 1578 and sent to a certain Circassian Ahmed further illustrates the Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus.⁸⁴ Ahmed was a Janey Circassian chief, who was given the title of *sancakbey* and his realm was considered a *sancak* of the Ottoman Empire. According to the order, a commercial ship carrying merchants, janissaries, some goods and slaves crashed on "the Circassian coast" and all on board were captured by "some Circassians."⁸⁵ Ahmed is instructed to find and return those enslaved people and goods. The order reads, "For

⁸² MD 71, no. 162; MD 73, no. 285; MD 74, no. 137.

⁸³ MD 51, no. 24.

⁸⁴ MD 62, no. 100.

⁸⁵ The Janeys lived in the Taman peninsula. Therefore, the aforementioned shipwreck most possibly happened around the strait of Kerch.

you submitted and have been loyal to the Porte, a military incursion into your province is not appropriate.”⁸⁶ Therefore, it was Ahmed’s duty as an Ottoman governor to find and return the captured people and goods. Another order with regard to the same issue was sent to Crimean Khan İslam Girey II in May 1578. It is said that although a certain Janey chief was an Ottoman subject as he received an imperial banner (*sancak-ı hümayun*), he was the one who captured merchants, janissaries, the goods, and slaves that were on the ship. According to this document, there were 150 Muslims including merchants and janissaries, and 548 slaves, women, and children on-board. The khan was instructed to send his men to the Janey region, find those people, and retrieve them. He was also asked to inquire why the aforementioned Janey chief, who was an Ottoman subject as he received a *sancak*, acted in such manner and refused to comply with the orders.⁸⁷ Interestingly, he was not instructed to punish the Circassian chief but only to investigate the issue.

In spite of the fact that there was no solidarity among the people of the North Caucasus belonging to the same ethnicity, tribal solidarity was important. Many Ottoman palace officials of Circassian origin did their best to help their relatives left in the North Caucasus. There are orders recorded in *mühimmes* with regards to palace officials asking to bring their relatives to Istanbul or claiming that a certain tribe accepted Ottoman suzerainty and could not be enslaved. The volume of such requests must have been high as on one occasion the Porte ordered the governor of Kefe to send a list of Circassian tribes who were subjects of the Porte.⁸⁸ Moreover, there are examples of important palace officials such as the Agha of the Janissaries (*Yeniçeri*

⁸⁶ Ibid. The Ottoman original reads, (*imdi Dergah-ı mu‘allama ‘arz u ubudiyyet üzere iken vilayetin üzerine akın gelmek münasib olmamagın...*)

⁸⁷ MD 62, no. 118.

⁸⁸ MD 6, no. 623.

Ağası) asking for such favours. According to an order dated November 7, 1573, Yeniçeri Ağası Mustafa claimed that the Circassian tribe to which he originally belonged and some other tribes that lived close by were subjects of the Ottoman sultan. He petitioned that these tribes were not to be enslaved. Accordingly, Istanbul sent an order to Kefe and to the Crimean khan instructing that those tribes were under the Porte's suzerainty and should not be enslaved or bothered. It was also ordered that if there were any slaves from these tribes, they had to be set free.⁸⁹

This document also illustrates my point about the difference between methods of the governor of Kefe and the Crimean khan in the North Caucasus, namely the carrot and stick strategy of the Porte. In the version that was sent to the Crimean khan, it is said, "Mustafa Aga of the Janissaries, who currently resides in Istanbul, petitioned that Bekeş, Kalem, and Can Temur tribes of the Circassians were his countrymen and loyal to the Porte. As such, these tribes were not to be enslaved and if there were any slaves, they were to be freed... Those mentioned tribes are indeed loyal to the Porte and to your court as has been reported... Therefore, it is ordered that aforementioned people are not to be oppressed or enslaved."⁹⁰ In this version, the Porte basically enjoins that those tribes were subjects of the Porte and should not be enslaved. However, the version sent to Kefe states the following: "Janissary Aga Mustafa, who currently resides in Istanbul, informed us that the Bekeş, Kalem and Can Temur tribes of the Circassians were his countrymen and loyal to the Porte. He petitioned that these tribes were not to be enslaved and if

⁸⁹ MD 23, no. 255, 256.

⁹⁰ (*Vilayet-i Çerakiseden Bekeş, Kalem ve Can Temür kabaili atabe-i 'aliyemde olan Yeniçeri Ağası Mustafa dame 'izzehu 'nun tavabi'inden olduğun aga-ı müşarileyh arz idüb zikr olunan kabail ita 'at üzeredür deyü min ba 'ad garet ve esir olunmamak ve esirleri var ise 'itlak olunmak babında inayet rica etmegin... zikr olunan kabail 'arz olunduğu üzere südde-i sa 'adetime ve ol tarafa ita 'at üzere olub....min ba 'ad mezburları garet ve haraset itdürmeyüb ve esirlerin aldurmeyub....*) MD 23, no. 255.

there were any slaves, they were to be freed, *provided that their loyalty is confirmed...*⁹¹ The italicized part is not included in the letter that was sent to the Crimean khan, because such leeway could have been used by the khan to actually enslave them claiming that they were not loyal to the Porte. However, the Ottoman Porte asked its own agent in Kefe to verify whether the information was true or not and then carry out the order.

These series of documents also give clues about how careful the Ottoman chancellery was with the wording of its letters. In the aforementioned order to the Crimean khan, the khan's sovereignty over the North Caucasus is stressed and recognized. In the letter to the khan, it is said, "those mentioned tribes are indeed loyal to the Porte and to *your court* as it has been reported... Therefore, it is ordered that the aforementioned people are not to be oppressed or enslaved."⁹² The italicized part explicitly indicates that these Circassian tribes were loyal both to the Porte and to the Crimean Khanate. This part was not included in the letter that was sent to Kefe. Therefore, the Ottomans recognized the right of the Crimean khan over the North Caucasus and respected his right to deal with his own vassals. In another example, in 1577, the Porte sent a letter to the khan inquiring about the construction of a fortress in the north near Azak. The letter says, "...in a part of the lands that are under your jurisdiction...on the Don River."⁹³ Istanbul thus approved the traditional sovereignty of the khanate over the North Caucasus and surrounding areas. This brings us to another point about the Crimean Khanate's role and Ottoman designs for a stronger hold over the region.

⁹¹(*Dergah-ı mu'allamda Yençeri Ağası olan Mustafa tezkire gönderüb Bekeş, Kalem ve Can Temür kabaili kendü tevabii ve mıntikasından olmagla südde-i sa'adete ita'at üzeredür deyü min ba'ad mezburlar garet olunmamak ve esirleri olunmamak babında inayet rica etmegin ita'atleri mukarrer ise....*) MD 23, no. 256.

⁹² MD 23, no. 255.

⁹³ MD 29, no. 112. (*kabza-i tasarrufunda olan memalikten...Ten suyu üzerinde...*)

The 1570s were the period when the Ottomans preferred a stronger hold in the North Caucasus. One of the most common methods by which imperial powers secured and strengthened their presence was by the building of fortresses. The Muscovites built several fortresses along the Terek following their annexation of the Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556 in order to solidify their presence in the North Caucasus and that was one of the reasons the Ottomans mounted the Astrakhan campaign of 1569. Appreciating the strategic value of the North Caucasus, the Ottomans planned to build fortresses in Kabarda, along the Terek or along the Kuban at different times throughout the sixteenth century but all such efforts failed. At times, the Ottomans were not fully committed and at other times, the Crimean khan was uncooperative. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Crimean khan never supported such projects in the North Caucasus mostly due to the fact that a strong Ottoman presence in the North Caucasus would contain the khanate in the east.

For example, in 1580 Behram, a Circassian chief and a member of the retinue of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, petitioned the Porte through Osman Pasha, who was in Derbend at that time, for permission to build two fortresses in the North Caucasus—one on the Terek and another on the Kuban. Behram promised to build those two fortresses with his own money if appointed as a governor with an annual salary of 200 thousand *akçe*. It was a perfect opportunity for the Porte considering that the sultan would not spend any money from the imperial treasury for those fortresses and that Behram was a Circassian chief who knew the region very well. Moreover, Behram was recommended by Osman Pasha who was trusted in Istanbul. An order in regards to this was sent to the Crimean khan. He was instructed to send men to secure those areas in which the fortresses would be constructed.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the *nazır* of Kefe was ordered to

⁹⁴ MD 43, no. 193 (See Appendix I-C).

send adequate number of *cerahors*, 500 men as *hisar eri*, and sufficient weapons for these fortresses.⁹⁵ Kefe was also asked to provide food and other basic provisions from the revenue of the port (*iskele*) of Kefe for three months until these fortresses started generating their own revenue.⁹⁶ In the 1580s, the Ottomans were involved in the Iranian war and actively addressed northern Caucasian affairs. By that time, they were well aware of the realities of the region. Unlike what the Muscovites had done when they built a fortresses on the Terek River upon the request of Temriuk to protect their vassal from his rivals, the Ottomans knew that such an endeavour would require support of the local Circassian chiefs so that these fortresses would be manned permanently and produce revenue in the region. For this reason, the Ottomans asked the Crimean khan to correspond with the Circassian rulers from the Terek and Kuban river basins and convince them to cooperate on this project.⁹⁷

Moreover, the position of the Crimean Khanate was crucial here. Although there was an active Ottoman presence in Dagestan and in the Caucasus in the 1580s, the Porte still needed the cooperation of the Crimean khan to persuade some of the local rulers. However, Crimean Khan Mehmed Girey II must have felt uneasy about the idea of Ottoman fortresses in the heart of the North Caucasus. Understandably, he advised the Porte that Behram was not qualified to be given such responsibility.⁹⁸ The *mühimme* entry unfortunately does not provide us with details in regards to how he proved that Behram was not qualified, but in any event the project to build fortresses in the North Caucasus was abandoned upon his advice. It is not difficult to understand

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ MD 43, no. 247 (See Appendix I-C).

⁹⁷ MD 43, no. 206 (See Appendix I-C).

⁹⁸ MD 43, no. 480 (See Appendix I-C).

that the khan did not like to see fortresses stationed with Ottoman soldiers in the North Caucasus especially at a time when the Ottomans had wrested most of the South Caucasus from the Safavids. Considering the non-cooperative and proudly Chinggisid character of Khan Mehmed Girey II, it was not an unexpected response. The Ottoman officials at the Porte might have decided not to upset Mehmed Girey II at a time when the Ottoman army was in the Caucasus and the Crimean military assistance was of utmost importance.⁹⁹ It is known that the Crimean khan was uncooperative during the Ottoman-Safavid war, which would eventually lead to his deposition in 1584 by the Porte. The man behind this fortress project, Osman Pasha, would see first-hand how unfortunate the abandonment of this project would be when he was attacked by the Cossacks in 1583 on the Terek River and lost many men. Had there been an Ottoman fortress in the region as planned by Osman Pasha himself, neither he nor the Ottoman troops would have had to deal with the Cossack threat en route to Kefe or Derbend.

We have already mentioned the religious characteristics of the North Caucasus as being very diverse and mutable. Just as the Muscovites were anxious to baptize the “heathen” north Caucasians, the Ottomans tried to convert the non-Muslim peoples there to Islam. It can be seen from the archival materials of the Ottoman Empire that after the Ottoman Porte intensified its activities in the region, many local pagan or Christian Circassian chiefs were converted to

⁹⁹ There could be reasons for the abandonment of the fortress project other than the advice of the Crimean khan and Porte’s unwillingness to alienate him during the war against the Safavids such as a cost-benefit analysis or care not to provoke a reaction from the Kabardinians and other local peoples. For example, when the Ottomans took over the fortress of Cankerman (Özi) from the Crimeans in 1538, they were faced with attacks of the Ukrainian Cossacks as their overlord, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, claimed the Right Bank Ukraine as far as the Black Sea. On the Cankerman fortress and the followings Cossack raids and Lithuanian claims, see Gilles Veinstein, “L’occupation ottomane d’Oçakov et le problème de la frontière lituano- tatare 1538–1544,” in *Turco-Tatar Past Soviet Present*, 123-55, esp. 146-55; Caroline Finkel and Victor Ostapchuk, “Outpost of Empire: An Appraisal of Ottoman Building Registers as Sources for Archeology and Construction History of the Black Sea Fortress of Özi,” *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 22 (2005): 150-88, esp. 152-53.

Islam.¹⁰⁰ However, as explained in Chapter 1, conversion did not necessarily mean that those people would side with their co-religious imperial power. Choice of religion in the north Caucasus was a flexible proposition and could be changed any time.

Just as the Muscovites, the Ottomans had difficulty in understanding this flexibility. It can be said that the Ottomans considered the Sunni Muslim rulers already on the Ottoman side in their rivalry with the Orthodox Muscovites and Shiite Safavids. Thus, rather than focusing on Muslim rulers, securing the alliance and even converting a Christian or pagan ruler in the North Caucasus made more sense to the Ottomans. This attitude can be seen in the Porte's dealings with local rulers. To illustrate, when the *shamkhal* of Daghestan, who was already a Muslim, asked for permission to visit Istanbul in 1574, he was refused. Instead, he was asked to stay in Dagestan as his realm was a part of the "frontiers" (*serhadd*).¹⁰¹ However, there are many examples of Christian or animist Circassian chiefs, wanting to convert to Islam, who were specifically asked to visit the Porte throughout the sixteenth century, even during the Safavid war.¹⁰² They were not only granted permission to visit Istanbul but also promised rewards and otherwise encouraged.

The Ottomans were attentive to the balance of power in the North Caucasus as well. That balance had been disturbed already due to the Muscovite annexation of Astrakhan in 1556. The easiest way to check the growing influence of Muscovy would have been to unleash the Crimean Tatars against it. Although Istanbul allowed and helped the Crimean khans to organize campaigns against Muscovy, it never wanted to see too strong a Crimean Khanate that could slip

¹⁰⁰ For example, see MD 5, no. 458; MD 48, no. 230; MD 68, no. 96.

¹⁰¹ MD 24, no. 510.

¹⁰² MD 5, no. 458; MD 48, no. 230; MD 68, no. 96.

away from its orbit and become a threat for the Ottoman possessions around the Black Sea. As already discussed, the Ottoman officials were aware of this danger and always held the khanate in bounds.¹⁰³ The Ottoman Porte began to be more dominating in their relations with the Crimean khans during the reign of Selim I. When Selim I was the governor of Kefe, Mengli Girey I offered to help him in his quest for the Ottoman throne in exchange for ceding some Ottoman possessions to the Crimean Khanate.¹⁰⁴ This offer must have shaped future policies of Sultan Selim I towards the khanate. It was the reign of Selim I when the Ottomans began the tradition of keeping a Crimean heir in Istanbul. Selim I and his successors often wanted to contain the khanate and keep it within certain boundaries. As a part of their policy of balancing and checking the power of the Crimean Khanate, the Ottomans were unwilling to let the khanate secure the heritage of the Golden Horde completely, which could allow it to become too strong and ambitious vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. It was for this reason that Ottoman Sultan Selim II asked for the cessation of Astrakhan to the Ottoman Empire and Kazan to the Crimean Khanate rather than proposing to give both of them to the Crimeans.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, the initial Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus was based on the Ottomans' long term understanding of the north. The Crimean khans were considered nominal sovereigns over the region with broad powers to punish the local populations whenever they deemed necessary. The Porte applied a carrot and stick policy for the local chiefs in the region. If a chief was obedient and loyal, he was granted salary from the revenues of Kefe and titles along with a

¹⁰³ İnalçık, "Power Relations," 186-189.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmet Uğur, "Yavuz Sultan Selim ile Kırım Hanı Mengli Giray ve oğlu Muhammed Giray arasında geçen iki konuşma," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi dergisi* 21 (1963): 357-61; Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe*, 40.

¹⁰⁵ Letter to the Muscovite king, MD 16, no. 3.

banner and other forms of investiture. In case a chief failed to fulfill his promises, the Crimean khan was sent there to punish him and plunder his lands and people. Indeed, the khans always welcomed such punitive opportunities as it allowed them to raid for slaves and other booty. With the rise of Muscovite power, the Ottomans, especially during and after the second half of the sixteenth century, felt the need to modify their northern policy in the North Caucasus in accordance with the intricacies and *sui generis* characteristics of this region.

4.2.2. Reflections on Muscovite Steppe Policy in the North Caucasus

The Muscovite advance in the southern steppes and in the North Caucasus was a part of their coherent policy which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was mostly shaped by Muscovy's dealing with the Golden Horde and its heirs. As a result of this, Muscovite bureaucracy became an expert in the steppe politics.

The Muscovites considered the North Caucasus within the framework of their steppe policy. The Muscovite officials obviously assumed that the peoples of the North Caucasus were no different from the other nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples that they encountered in the southern frontier, namely those who already were or would eventually be "tamed." However, they simply ignored the unique social, political, and geographical dynamics of the North Caucasus. The political structures and peoples of the North Caucasus were different than those of the Turco-Mongolian nomadic societies in the south and east of Muscovy. It should also be indicated at this point that as it was the case with the Ottoman-North Caucasus relation, the local peoples of the North Caucasus did not leave any written records of their agreements or relations with Muscovy in their own language. Most of what we find in the Muscovite documents is written through the prism of the Muscovite bureaucracy. As such, letters whose tone and attitude

were considered inappropriate were translated in a way that would suit the Muscovite tsar's own image as the sovereign over these people, who requested the protection of the tsar, submitted and swore to remain loyal to Muscovy.¹⁰⁶ In addition to these, Aytok Namitok claims that documents that could have showed us the real situation in the second half of the sixteenth century burned in the great fire of 1626 in Moscow.¹⁰⁷

At first, to the local rulers in the North Caucasus, Muscovy obviously seemed as one of the potential allies that could help them in their policy of survival in a region where conflict between the local rulers, foreign invasions, and slave raids were a way of life. As for the Adyghes, the Muscovites were a possible ally to relieve the nearby Crimean pressure over them. Even the Muslim Daghestani rulers initially solicited Muscovite alliance against the Safavids as well as for their mutual power struggles within Daghestan.¹⁰⁸ The Kabardinians also saw an opportunity to protect themselves from the Crimean Tatars and the *shamkhal* of Daghestan.¹⁰⁹ For these local rulers, Muscovy would not be an intruder or conqueror in their lands because of the fact that Muscovite heartlands were far away from the area and there was a huge steppe between the North Caucasus and the Muscovite center.¹¹⁰ Therefore, compared to Safavid Iran, which was uninterested and in fact unable to control even Daghestan, and to the Ottoman Porte, which followed a laxer policy only strengthening its position in the Kuban region but until 1569 leaving everything else to the Crimean khan, Muscovy was the most promising ally for the North

¹⁰⁶ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 69-75; Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 37.

¹⁰⁷ Namitok, "The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia," 18.

¹⁰⁸ Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 6.

¹¹⁰ Namitok, "The Voluntary Adherence of Kabarda to Russia," 18.

Caucasus polities. For Muscovy, the North Caucasus was a buffer zone to protect the lower Volga and passage to Iran and the Georgian Kingdoms. Being very opportunistic and experienced in their southern frontier, Muscovite officials did not hesitate to expand their sphere of influence towards the North Caucasus.

As already stated, Kabarda was the focus of Muscovite activity in the North Caucasus because of its strategic location allowing for control of the Daryal Pass. N. A. Smirnov claims that the Kabardinians were well-informed about Muscovy and its struggle with the khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Crimea.¹¹¹ Considering that the latter two had been a threat to the Kabardinian lands, Smirnov thinks that it was only natural for Kabarda to seek Muscovite protection.¹¹² However, as we know, Kabarda was not a united principality and each chief had a different notion or preference in regards to different foreign powers. So, it was not the whole of Kabarda that sought protection of the tsar, but certain Kabardinian chiefs who wanted to protect their lands from their external and internal enemies. This is the point that the Muscovite policymakers preferred to ignore but definitely understood. And this is where the idea of creating a supreme ruler who would control others in the principality came into play.

The Muscovites received Circassian envoys from the region of Beshtav, the first arriving in 1552. In November of 1552, Circassian princes Maashuk, Ezbozluk, and Tanashuk were received in Moscow and at that time they requested protection against the Crimean khan.¹¹³ Considering that the Muscovites and Crimean Tatars were at odds over the conquest of Kazan by Ivan IV, and thus enemies, it is easy to understand why those Circassian princes chose Muscovy

¹¹¹ Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 26.

¹¹² Ibid., 26.

¹¹³ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 3.

as an ally in 1552. The Crimean and Ottoman pressures over the Adyghes and the Beshtav region was an important reason for the Circassian appeals to the tsar. In 1555, another group of princes from the Adyghes including Sibok, Atsymguk, Tutaryk, and Kudadik also came to Moscow requesting protection of the tsar.¹¹⁴ Such appeals were welcomed by the Muscovite officials as they provided them with an opportunity to claim these areas being under tsar's sovereignty. In 1557, the most appealing petition came from the Kabardinians. Representatives of the Kabardinian chiefs, Temriuk and Tazriut came to Astrakhan to request Muscovite assistance.¹¹⁵ This petition perfectly suited the objectives the Muscovite officials had in the North Caucasus.¹¹⁶ The tsar gladly accepted the Kabardinians and thereupon the Muscovites immediately started to apply their co-optation strategy in Kabarda.

However, co-optation would not be a productive strategy in the North Caucasus because of the complex social structure and different understanding of politics. In fact, rather than producing favourable results, the co-optation strategy created further problems for Muscovite officials in the region. The Muscovites were surprised when faced with the fact that the chief or noble family to whom they had granted economic and social privileges were unable to control the rest of their society or even their own family. For example, co-optation in Kabarda went hand in hand with creating a supreme ruler out of one of the princes. This was intolerable or hard to accept for the Kabardinian society whose chiefs were independent of each other and had equal rights. Temriuk was one of the chiefs and most of the Kabardinian princes did not respect his

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁶ Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 26.

title “great prince of Kabarda” endorsed by the Muscovites.¹¹⁷ Some Kabardinian princes immediately entered into contact with the Crimean khan and the Porte to counterbalance Temriuk’s new power projected through his new ally and protector.

Therefore, it was not surprising that with the death of Temriuk following the Crimean raid of 1570 in which pro-Crimean Kabardinian chiefs either remained neutral or fought against Temriuk,¹¹⁸ the Muscovite influence diminished greatly. The Muscovites wanted to ensure the election of Temriuk’s son, Mamstriuk, as the *pshihua* of Kabarda.¹¹⁹ However, the *pshihua* chosen by the gentry council of Kabarda, at the end, was Kanbulat, who collaborated with the Crimean khan. Similarly after Kanbulat’s death, the Muscovites were unable to manipulate elections and prevent Arslan Bey, who served the Ottomans during the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590, from becoming the *pshihua* of Kabarda in 1589. His pro-Ottoman and pro-Crimean policies were well-known to the Muscovites as we understand from the Muscovite documents.¹²⁰

Conversion of the local non-Christian population and chiefs was desired by the Muscovites as a part of their strategy. However, conversion to Orthodox Christianity of the upper level of feudal nobility did not produce the desired outcomes for Muscovy because those local chiefs, *mirzas* or other nobles of the North Caucasus and specifically of Kabarda, who converted to Christianity, preferred to stay in Moscow and enter the service of the Muscovite tsar rather than coming back to their homeland and serving and strengthening Muscovite interests there.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” 26.

¹¹⁸ Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 32.

¹¹⁹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹²¹ Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda,” 37.

For example, Temriuk's son Saltanuk, who went to Moscow and was baptized as Mikhail Temriukovich Cherkasskii, remained in the tsar's service in Moscow. However, Muscovite policy in terms of conversion was flexible and they did not pressure the local chief that they were attempting to co-opt to convert to their religion. The best example of this is that Temriuk and his sons in Kabarda were all Muslims and remained so in spite of the fact that they were in the service of the tsar and genuinely avoided working with the Ottomans or Crimean Tatars. Similar to the Ottoman policy of converting the local population of the North Caucasus, the Muscovites too encouraged mass conversions in Kabarda. In 1560, Orthodox priests were sent from Muscovy to Kabarda so that they would convert the subdued Kabardinian masses to Orthodox Christianity.¹²² Moreover, the voevoda of Terek was also ordered to bring orthodox priests to Kabarda.¹²³

In addition to these, Muscovy used its own military in the North Caucasus as a part of its steppe policy. However, Muscovite fortresses filled with *streltsy* in Kabarda were viewed unfavourably by most of the Kabardinian chiefs. Neither the Ottomans nor Crimean Tatars had built fortresses or stationed permanent soldiers in the region before the Muscovite activities in the North Caucasus. Thus, it was the first time in 1567 that a foreign power built a fortress in the heart of the Kabardinian lands. It can be understood that this act was viewed by the Kabardinians as a threat to their independence.

Initially Muscovite fortresses were not as effective as they had been in the steppes. These fortresses were either demolished or abandoned several times due to the pressures from the Porte

¹²² *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 8; Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 27.

¹²³ Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda," 37.

and the Crimean khans. Moreover, they were not able to completely control the entire Kabardinian territory. This does not mean, however, that the fortresses were completely useless. The fortresses enabled the Muscovite officials to protect the pro-Muscovite party in Kabarda even during the Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590, when there was an intense Ottoman pressure and military activity. At the end of the first round of the imperial game, in the first years of the seventeenth century, there remained no Muscovite fortresses, soldiers, or power in Kabarda. Yet, the construction of fortresses in Kabarda was an indication of the Muscovite intentions for incorporation of the frontier zones in the North Caucasus and as already seen helped the Muscovites learn important lessons for their future engagements in the region.

As a part of their strategy, the Muscovite officials avoided a direct conflict with the Ottoman Empire in the North Caucasus. They were well aware of the distinction between the Crimean Tatar raids in Muscovite territories and Ottoman policy in the north. They also knew that interests of the Crimeans and the Porte in the north were not always compatible. Moreover, that the Ottoman Porte tried to control the Crimean Khanate and contain its power so that it would not be a threat to the Ottoman possessions around the Black Sea must have been known to the Muscovites too.

For these reasons, Muscovy did not need to restrain itself against the Crimean Khanate. This is obvious in Muscovy's negotiations with Circassian chiefs from Beshtav region in 1555. Again, the Circassian chiefs sought protection from the Crimean Tatars and from the Ottomans. The tsar gladly agreed to protect them from the Tatars but communicated his desire to be on peaceful terms with the Ottoman sultan.¹²⁴ The Muscovite officials were quite cautious about

¹²⁴ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 4.

this. They followed a risk avoidance strategy in the sixteenth century even when their ultimate interests were very negatively affected. For example, although the tsar fervently justified his annexation of Astrakhan in his correspondence with the Crimean khan and refused to compromise,¹²⁵ during the Ottoman campaign of Astrakhan in 1569 he did not send his troops to stop the approaching Ottoman army and patiently waited for the result. Moreover, the tsar agreed to demolish the fortress in Kabarda despite the failure of the Ottomans in 1569. Being aware of the risks involved, the Muscovite officials shunned away from a direct confrontation with the Ottomans on the southern frontier at a time when their presence in the region was still quite fragile. In case of serious Ottoman aggression towards Muscovite possessions, there was a possibility that Muscovy would incur losses that could not be recovered at all and even the very existence of Muscovy could be in danger considering threats from the Crimea, the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Sweden.

Although they avoided a direct conflict with the Porte, the Muscovites skilfully employed the Cossacks in the North Caucasus. Their activity and role along the Terek River intensified as the Muscovite fortresses popped up in the region. In addition to *strel'tsy* sent from Astrakhan, the Cossacks provided the necessary manpower to garrison these fortresses and serve the tsar as an auxiliary and proxy force. Military services of the Cossacks were much demanded by the pro-Muscovite local chiefs in the North Caucasus in their struggles against their rivals.¹²⁶

In fact, the Muscovite activity in the north-western Caucasus (Taman-Kuban and Beshtav regions) was only limited to such indirect manipulation of centrifugal elements like the Cossacks

¹²⁵ Ibid., 4, 18.

¹²⁶ Smirnov, *Politika Rossii na Kavkaze*, 29.

against the Ottomans because a direct involvement here in the Adyghe Circassian lands would have meant challenging the Ottoman Porte directly. These Cossacks became a significant tool for indirect confrontation with Ottoman advances in the North Caucasus. For example, it was the Cossacks who made a serious attack on Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa in 1583 on his way from Derbend to Kefe.

Astrakhan was very important in terms of the application of Muscovite strategies in the North Caucasus. While the Porte was using Kefe and Crimea to coordinate its carrot and stick policy, the Muscovite officials engineered their North Caucasus strategies through Astrakhan both for incentives and punishment. Although the Muscovite policy was planned in Moscow, the voevoda of Astrakhan was responsible for its realization in the region. His main duty was to know the region very well and manipulate different groups against each other so that co-optation policy could function in the interest of the Muscovite tsar. Furthermore, Astrakhan was an important communication point linking Muscovy with local polities and hordes that were willing to get help from Muscovy in exchange for their alliance or obedience. Negotiations with the local rulers were mostly held in Astrakhan. After the establishment of the town of Terek in 1588 on the mouth of the Terek River, Terek became the center for the North Caucasus operations of Muscovy.

Muscovite officials began to create their sphere of influence in the North Caucasus by applying their well-tested southern policy. However, this would be a mistake on their part in the long-run and it took a very long time before the policy makers in Moscow modified their strategies in the North Caucasus according to the realities of the region. The steppe policy of Muscovy, which had been a success over the Turkic steppe powers, turned out to be not as effective as it was expected when applied in the North Caucasus. There were three main reasons

for this failure. One of them was that the initial and swift success of Muscovy in the North Caucasus caused them to expand their sphere of influence beyond their capabilities and material power in the region. Second, they ignored the unique dynamics of the North Caucasus. Lastly, the Muscovites had to face the Ottomans for the first time as a rival in this region.

Even when Muscovy was in political and social turmoil after the death of Ivan IV in 1584, the Muscovite struggle and expansion in the North Caucasus continued without abatement or alteration. In 1594 and 1605 they were able to make two offensive expeditions into Daghestan with thousands of troops. This is similar to how the Ottoman grand policy on the western frontier and in the Balkans functioned during the Ottoman interregnum (1402-1413) when there was no central power, but the state apparatus was strong and well-defined policies still operated. Namely, Ottomans gave priority to and formulated a grand policy in their dealings in the western frontier as a main direction of expansion in the early fifteenth century. Similar to this, one of the main directions of Muscovite expansion was south where the Muscovite grand policy in the southern frontier zone functioned effectively.

Considering that it was only after penetration and expansion of Muscovy into the North Caucasus that the Ottomans decided to alter their policy there, we can say that Muscovite steppe policy not only affected the political structures in the frontiers zones but also influenced the Ottoman policy in the north and specifically in the North Caucasus. Moreover, there was a reciprocal process between the imperial powers and the local political structures of the North Caucasus. Namely, just as the imperial policies and strategies implemented by the Ottoman Porte and Muscovy underwent a change due to the peculiarities of the North Caucasus, so too these imperial policies would affect the political and social structures of local peoples which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE VIEW FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS: A TALE OF FIVE RULERS

W. E. D. Allen writes, “A natural desire to ride all the horses at once was characteristic of the North Caucasian chieftains.”¹ Similarly, according to Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, the North Caucasian chiefs played one empire off against the other and in order to maximize their material and political benefits from the imperial rivalry readily changed not only their protector but even their religion.² They certainly ready to “ride all horses,” that is to say, change their orientation and religion or even submit to the Ottoman sultan and Muscovite tsar simultaneously. However, as the present chapter will show, most of the time they had no other choice.

This chapter will analyze policies, strategies, and objectives of five rulers who submitted both to the Muscovite tsar and the Ottoman sultan simultaneously or at different times in the second half of the sixteenth century. Since we do not have any sources written in the local languages of the North Caucasus on the history of the local polities and peoples, an analysis of these local chiefs and their strategies based on Ottoman and Muscovite sources will provide us with a framework to understand internal mechanisms of their political

¹ *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings (1589-1605)*, ed. W. E. D. Allen, text trans. Anthony Mango (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970), 291.

² Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the sixteenth century,” in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London: C. Hurst, 1992), 22.

structures and their functioning within their own polities and with the expanding imperial powers in the region.

The local chiefs that will be examined in this chapter are Solokh of the Kabardinians, Kansavuk and Sibok of the Janeys, and Urus of the Greater Nogays. Moreover, although his kingdom was not in the North Caucasus, Alexander II of Kakheti will also be mentioned due to his role in the North Caucasus affairs and that his case offers good insights from the perspective of local rulers caught between two powers. Apart from these individual local rulers, the family rivalry between the Kaytuk(ov)s and the Idar(ov)s of Kabarda, which led to the several invasions of the Kabardinian territories by different powers in the second half of the sixteenth century will also be looked at.

Arguments and ideas in the present chapter are, to a certain extent, connected with the old question of nomadic “greedy or needy” theories that are common in the discourse on Inner Asian Turco-Mongol nomadic states and their relations with their sedentary neighbours, mostly the Chinese dynasties.³ Again, many historians consider that the North Caucasus rulers—be they Adyghe, Kabardinian or Daghestani chiefs—tried to gain utmost advantage out of the imperial rivalry over their territories between the Ottomans, Muscovites, and Safavids. They were “greedy” and always desired to receive higher salaries, loftier titles, and more gifts from different powers at different times or simultaneously. Pledges of allegiance meant little to these rulers and they broke their promises easily, and even changed their religion whenever it promised greater reward. However, this was not the case as it has been suggested throughout this dissertation and will specifically be demonstrated in this

³ See Nicola Di Cosmo, “Ancient Inner Asian Nomads,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1994): 1092-1126 for an explanation of these terms.

chapter. Can we say that it was their “need” then? These polities were not nomadic except for the Greater Nogay Horde and most of the time they were self-sufficient. Considering that before the second half of the sixteenth century, the North Caucasus polities had been a source of slaves, renowned swords, and many other materials with a location that controlled several important trade routes, the North Caucasus people and polities had been giving their resources to outsiders—predominantly to the Crimean Khanate as tribute—rather than needing any from outside powers. That means “needy” was not exactly the case either. In fact, it was more complicated than this. Those local rulers were forced to play one power against another and they had to do so for their “survival” in their own lands.

5.1. Solokh of Kabarda

Let us start with Kabarda as it was the focal point of the Muscovite involvement in the second half of the sixteenth century. The first local ruler to be examined is Solokh of Kabarda. Solokh was from the Tasoltan (Tausaltan) family and was related to Temriuk’s family, the Idars, by blood, as all of these princely families descended from one ancestor, Inal.⁴ As we understand from the Ottoman documents, along with Ibak (known as Abak in the Ottoman documents), who was a cousin of Solokh,⁵ the Tasoltan family served the Ottoman Porte in the 1580s and 1590s. Solokh was eldest of the three sons of *Pshi* Tansaruk and became *pshi* of his family after Tansaruk died in the first decades of the second half of the sixteenth century. Solokh was one of the strongest chiefs in Kabarda in the 1580s and the

⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy, izvlechennii iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

Muscovite policymakers were determined to make him one of the pro-Muscovite chiefs in Kabarda.

Solokh received several orders from the Porte regarding the North Caucasus supply route and was asked to help the Ottoman army and messengers going through his region. For example, he was sent a *hil'at* from the Porte in 1583 with Ferhad Kethüda, who was en route to Derbend from Kefe.⁶ Moreover, in 1586, Solokh, along with other Kabardinian and Adyghe chiefs, was asked to ensure the safety of the treasury sent to Derbend from the Porte as it would pass through his area of control.⁷ We also know from Muscovite sources that one of the daughters of Solokh was married to the Crimean khan. According to the report of pro-Muscovite chiefs Kudenek and Chapalov, a Crimean *hanzade* visited Solokh's settlement and spent a winter there in the late 1580s.⁸ He was also known to have received gifts from the Ottoman Porte which was sent by another Crimean *hanzade*, who visited also Aslanbek in 1589.⁹

However, there were arguments among his gentry regarding Solokh's pro-Ottoman/Crimean orientation. An interesting and illustrating conversation between Solokh and his *works* who supported an alliance with the Muscovites rather than the Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars is recorded in the Muscovite sources. We know that his *works* pressurized Solokh by saying, "the entire Kabardinian land is now serving the sovereign

⁶ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri mühimme defteri* (henceforth MD) 51, no.10.

⁷ MD 61, no. 41.

⁸ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 135.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 130-31.

(*gosudar*) and you are still willing to oppose the tsar and the entire Kabardinian land?”¹⁰ It is important to note that in this discussion even one of these *works* threatened him that he would leave Solokh for another *pshi* if Solokh insisted on serving the Crimean khan and Ottoman sultan.¹¹ Unfortunately, the sources do not specify why Solokh’s gentry were trying to convince their *pshi* to join the Muscovite camp. What we know is that the late 1580s were a time when Muscovite power in Kabarda was on the rise. By 1588, the Muscovites had a very strong position in Kabarda thanks partly to the allegiance of the Idar family (headed by Kanbulat and Mamstriuk at that time) and especially with their direct involvement through Terek Town. Therefore, the gentry might have thought that offering their allegiance to the Muscovites might be the only way to secure their positions in Kabarda. Furthermore, the *works* were most possibly encouraged by Mamstriuk, who visited Solokh’s settlements several times to bring him letters from the Muscovite tsar and from the voevoda of Terek, and apparently had some friends among the *works* of Solokh.¹²

This is also a good example of how the gentry in Kabarda functioned in their relation with the *pshis*. They were quite free and even were able to threaten their own lords in case they did not approve his policies. Faced with the opposition of his own *works*, Solokh responded that he could not leave the Crimean khan and the *shamkhal* because two of his daughters (Solokh’s other daughter was married to the Daghestani *shamkhal*) and many of his good men were by then in the Crimea and in Daghestan in the court of the khan and

¹⁰ Ibid., 136.

¹¹ Ibid., 136.

¹² Ibid., 136. It is noted that when horses of several Cossacks, who brought letter from Terek, were seized upon Solokh’s orders, Mamstriuk sent them back with horses he received from Solokh’s *works* who were on good terms with Mamstriuk.

shamkhal.¹³ As such, Solokh's allegiance was secured in several ways by the Porte and its vassals in the region.

However, Solokh tried to approach the tsar in order to allay the Muscovites, who were readying for military raids on the pro-Ottoman/Crimean chiefs in Kabarda, including Solokh, his brothers, nephews and sons, Tapshiuk, Aslanbek, and Yansokh.¹⁴ A *gramota* was sent to the voevoda of Terek in August 1588 asking him to prepare for raids in alliance with Kanbulat, Mamstriuk, Kudenek, and other pro-Muscovite chiefs in order to punish those Kabardinian chiefs who did not want to submit to the tsar and who "did not restrain themselves from having relations with the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans."¹⁵ When faced with a military threat, Solokh had to take action in order to protect his settlements and position. For this reason, early in 1589, Solokh chose to approach the tsar through Murad Girey who was then working with the Muscovites. Solokh probably thought that this move would not cause a big problem with the Crimean khan and the Ottoman Porte because Murad Girey had already sent a letter of submission and apology to the Crimean khan and Ottoman sultan in 1588 and his submission was immediately accepted by the Porte.¹⁶ Solokh might have known that this would be the best way to conciliate with the Muscovites and at the same time not to upset the Crimean khan and the Porte.

In February 1589, Solokh sent his envoys, Bikan and Lana, to Moscow to pledge allegiance to Murad Girey and the tsar. In accordance with the Muscovite records, his envoys

¹³ Ibid., 136-37.

¹⁴ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1957), 54-55.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MD 64, no. 232.

petitioned that Solokh be taken under the hand of the Muscovite tsar and the tsar accepted their petition.¹⁷ Solokh's allegiance was important for the Muscovites as he was one of the strongest chiefs in Kabarda. To illustrate, in addition to Mamstriuk and Kanbulat, Solokh was the only other Kabardinian chief to whom the tsar sent a letter in July 1589 to order him to dispatch men to fight for Muscovy against the Swedes.¹⁸

By submitting to the Muscovite tsar, Solokh was able to avert a possible military raid on his territories by the Muscovite forces in collaboration with his rival Kabardinian chiefs. However, this strategy would not last long and in the fall of 1589, only a few months following the tsar's letter about his submission and sending men to the western front, Solokh was declared to be the only pro-Ottoman/Crimean Kabardinian chief by fervent Muscovite supporter Mamstriuk.¹⁹ Moreover, the voevoda of Terek reported that Solokh had still not given any hostages and come to Terek Town to pay homage to the tsar and receive his annuity.²⁰ As the Muscovite policy dictated, the Muscovites first tried to convince Solokh once more to part with the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans and submit to the tsar. For this reason, the Muscovite envoys to Georgian King Alexander II met with Solokh en route to Kakheti and gave him a *kaftan*, hat, sables, and other gifts with a total worth of 82 rubles from the tsar.²¹ The fact that value of his gifts were quite high compared to the gifts sent to the other chiefs shows the prestige and importance of Solokh.

¹⁷ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 55-56; *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 66.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 108-09.

If we look at the events up to this point, what is understood in terms of the local politics among the Kabardinian chiefs is that Solokh was one of the most powerful chiefs and as such he was a contender for the position of the *pshihua* after Kanbulat's and Aslanbek's death in 1589. We know from Muscovite reports that he was feared in Kabarda due to his strength. To illustrate, when Mamstriuk visited his settlement to bring him a letter from the Muscovites, he and Kudenek did not dare to enter Solokh's settlement but camped a bit further away.²² Solokh was able to pose a threat to Mamstriuk who was supported by the Muscovites and even to Kudenek, son of Kanbulat, the *pshihua* of Kabarda.

Because of his pro-Ottoman/Crimean position Solokh was obviously not favoured by the family and relatives of Temriuk and their allies for the position of *pshihua*. Therefore, it must have been clear to Solokh that his bid for the position of *pshihua* of Kabarda would not be accepted by the pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs and the Muscovite governors in Terek and Astrakhan. Moreover, as we will see below, although the Muscovites tried to draw Solokh into their side, they never trusted him. Considering all these factors, it was certain that following the death of Aslanbek in 1589, the *pshihua* candidate had to receive support of the pro-Muscovite party as they formed the majority of the Kabardinian chiefs in 1589. Since Solokh, as a candidate, was not trusted by Mamstriuk, Kudenek, and the Muscovites, he knew that the only support he could get to strengthen his position in Kabarda would come from the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans. Had he given up his pro-Ottoman/Crimean stance, he would have risked losing the support from the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans. In this case and in the case of possible attacks from his rival Kabardinian chiefs supported by the Muscovites, he could have lost all his power and territories in Kabarda. Even if he accepted

²² Ibid., 136.

Muscovite suzerainty, he would be treated with suspicion and there was a possibility that eventually Mamstriuk and other rivals would convince the Muscovites to eliminate him by building on the doubts about Solokh that already existed.

At this point it should also be pointed out that Yansokh's rapprochement with Muscovy after the death of his brother, Kabardinian *pshihua* Aslanbek, who was a fervent supporter of the Ottomans in the North Caucasus can also be explained within the framework of the power struggle among the Kabardinian chiefs for the position of *pshihua*. Yansokh was listed by the Muscovites among the Kabardinian chiefs that had not petitioned to be taken under the hand of the Muscovite tsar. In addition to Aslanbek and Solokh, Yansokh was also a target of the military campaigns organized by the Muscovites and pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs.²³

However, in the fall of 1589, he changed his orientation and pledged his allegiance to the Muscovite ruler. In my opinion, this was a move he made in order to get the support of the pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs for his bid to be the *pshihua* of Kabarda after Aslanbek in 1589. It was an election and the support of pro-Muscovite party was crucial and necessary to be elected. That is why he took a U-turn all of a sudden in the fall of 1589 and submitted to Muscovy. His submission also provided him with security against Solokh who was a contender for the position and was strong enough to defeat him. By ensuring the support of the Muscovite forces and pro-Muscovite Kabardinian chiefs, Yansokh secured his position and himself against the ambitions of Solokh. Along with Yansokh many other pro-Ottoman chiefs from his family submitted to Muscovy in the late 1589.

²³ Ibid., 110, 140; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 54-55.

Solokh is an epitome of the inability of local rulers to secure their positions without external support as soon as one local ruler was supported by an external power as it happened in the second half of the sixteenth century in Kabarda. He also represents the flexibility of local and international politics in the region. Solokh was able to avoid several attacks on his territories. Due to the growing opposition from his own gentry and an imminent threat of military intervention by the Muscovites encouraged by Mamstriuk and new *pshihua* of Kabarda Yansokh, Solokh had to accept Muscovite sovereignty along with Alkas—another pro-Ottoman/Crimean chief in Kabarda. He took the oath of allegiance and gave his *work* as hostage to the Muscovite envoys in the fall of 1589. When he was taking the oath in the presence of the Muscovite envoys, Solokh accepted that he had been “receiving gifts from the Porte and Crimean khan but now wished to serve the sovereign tsar and be protected under his tsar’s hand.” He also said to the Muscovite envoys that his rival Kabardinian chiefs must have told them “many lies about himself” and that he failed to visit the Muscovite envoys earlier because he was ill.²⁴

Despite his submission, not surprisingly his loyalty was still not trusted by the Muscovites. Mamstriuk, who claimed that Solokh was the only Kabardinian *pshi* who did not serve the Muscovite tsar, possibly had a role in this distrust. He and his allies convinced the Muscovite voevoda in Terek and eventually a punitive force led by the voevoda of Terek consisting of Muscovite *strel'tsy* and Cossacks in alliance with Kabardinian chiefs raided Solokh’s settlements. In the end, Solokh stopped the Muscovites by surrendering his son and twenty of his *works* as surety.²⁵ Thereby Solokh was taken under control by the pro-

²⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 145.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 182-83.

Muscovite party in Kabarda by force. As understood from the Ottoman documents, due to the Ottoman presence in Daghestan and possibility of Muscovite intervention in the lands of the *shamkhal*, the Porte intensified its activities in Daghestan rather than trying to save pro-Ottoman chiefs in Kabarda. In the 1580s and 1590s, Daghestan was much more important for the Ottomans in terms of its strategic location for their newly established governor-generalships in Derbend in the North and Shirvan and Şemahı in the South Caucasus and for the fact that Kabarda could be pacified as soon as Daghestan and its local rulers were entirely under the control of the Porte. This actually proved to be a well-calculated strategy, because as soon as the Muscovites were ousted from Daghestan in the early years of the seventeenth century they also disappeared from Kabarda. As we saw earlier in chapters 2 and 3, many Kabardinian chiefs returned to the Ottoman/Crimean camp after the defeat of the Muscovite forces in Tarku in 1605.

Furthermore, Solokh poses a good example of how and why a local ruler changed his orientation in the North Caucasus. It should be pointed out that he did not change his orientation to maximize his benefits in terms of salaries or gifts. As explained, he refused to meet the Muscovite envoys and receive the gifts sent by the tsar for a long time. He eventually gave the *shert'* to the Muscovites in order to survive. When Aslanbek was alive, they were able to keep the balance of power in Kabarda and were as strong as the pro-Muscovite chiefs in the early 1580s. In fact, the pro-Ottoman faction was definitely more powerful in the 1570s. However, after Aslanbek's death and due to the increase in Muscovite influence as well as Yansokh's rapprochement with Muscovy, Solokh and Alkas had no choice but to submit to the tsar or face punitive raids. However, considering that his daughters were married to the Crimean khan and the *shamkhal* and that many of his men

were in the Crimea or in Daghestan, his hands were tied by those arrangements, so he had to play his cards very carefully.

In Kabarda, imperial policies and local politics were intertwined. That is, if we look at the imperial rivalry from a Kabardinian point of view, what we consider to be the power struggle between the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy in the second half of the sixteenth century can be viewed as a power struggle between two princely Kabardinian families: the Kaytuk(ov)s and the Idar(ov)s. As said, these princely families descended from *Pshi Inal*. Therefore, they were relatives, yet also rivals for power and dominance in Kabarda. Inal's son Tabuly Mirza had three sons. The eldest son, Inarmas, was the father of Idar and Idar was the father of Temriuk and Kanbulat. Thus, Temriuk and his brothers were known as the Idar(ov)s. Second son of Tabuly Mirza was Yankhot and from his son Beslen descended Kaytuk, who was the father of Psheapshoko, Arslan, and Yansokh, thus forming the Kaytuk family. Yankhot had another son named Tasoltan whose son was Tasaruk, the father of Solokh.²⁶

In my opinion, as has been pointed out several times throughout the present dissertation, it was the rivalry between these two princely families rather than antipathy to the Crimean Tatars or the *shamkhal* that led Temriuk to petition the Muscovite tsar in the first place. Temriuk was the eldest son of Idar, who was the *pshihua* of Kabarda in the first half of the sixteenth century. With Idar's death, the competition for power in Kabarda intensified and Temriuk at that point used the opportunity well and received support from the Muscovites. His rivals were initially strong enough to force him flee Kabarda to Astrakhan in

²⁶ Ibid., 1-8.

1563.²⁷ He was able to restore his power in Kabarda only with Muscovite military help consisting of one thousand *streltsy* and an unknown number of Cossacks. It is understood that without Muscovite support, the Kaytuk family led by Psheapshoko, brother of Aslanbek and Yansokh, would have overwhelmed Temriuk of the Idars and been dominant in Kabarda. What saved Temriuk at that point was the direct Muscovite help from Astrakhan ordered by the tsar, who was married to the daughter of Temriuk.²⁸ In their struggle against Temriuk and the Muscovites, Psheapshoko and Aslanbek of the Kaytuks petitioned the Ottoman Porte and Crimean khan for their support, which shows that submission of Aslanbek to the Porte dates back to the early years of the 1560s.

With the construction of a Muscovite fortress in the heart of Kabarda in 1567, the situation deteriorated for the Kaytuk family. This was the time when the Porte began to worry about the Muscovite intentions and the Crimean khan was asked to raid Kabardinian lands that belonged to the pro-Muscovite chiefs. However, Muscovy was not deterred and did not abandon the fortress until 1571 when they did so in order to assuage the Ottoman sultan. The real victory for the Kaytuks had already come in 1570 when the Crimean Tatar forces devastated the lands of Temriuk and pro-Muscovite chiefs. In this campaign, the Crimean forces were guided by Kazy Murza (Gazi Mirza, Kordanuk). Kazy was from the Kaytuk family and he was one of the sons of Psheapshoko and a nephew of Aslanbek.²⁹ With the direct military intervention of the Crimean forces, the Kaytuk family managed to break

²⁷ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (henceforth PSRL), *Lietopisnii sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarshei ili Nikonovskoi letopis* (St. Petersburg, 1904; Reprint, Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 13: 370-71.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 370-71.

²⁹ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 5.

the power and hegemony of the Idars in Kabarda. Temriuk was dead and his two sons were taken prisoner by the Crimean Tatars.³⁰

There is no information in the Ottoman and Muscovite sources regarding the exact circumstances following Temriuk's death and Kanbulat's election as the *pshihua* of Kabarda. However, it is clear from the lack of Muscovite activity until 1578 when Kanbulat submitted to the tsar that Kanbulat had an agreement with the Kaytuk family and was in alliance with the Crimean/Ottoman faction in Kabarda. That is why he was elected for this position to replace Temriuk despite the great loss of power by Temriuk and his family. It was the Ottoman and Crimean party that dominated Kabarda between 1570 and 1578. To further illustrate, a Kabardinian chief, who had a Muslim name of Mehmed, was appointed by the Ottoman Porte as the *sancakbey* (governor) of Kabarda in 1573.³¹

The Kabardinian chiefs of Kaytuk lineage remained loyal to the Ottoman sultan and Crimean khan in the 1580s, as we understand from the Ottoman and Muscovite documents. There are orders sent to Aslanbek, his brothers (Yansokh, Tapshinuk) and his nephew Kazy (Gazi Mirza) from the Porte asking for their help for the Ottoman soldiers going through their regions.³² It is known that Aslanbek of the Kaytuks was a relative of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha and they met in Kabarda in 1584. It is written in *Şeca'atname* by Mehmed Çelebi who was with the Ottoman army in the Caucasus that Osman Pasha's father side was

³⁰ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (henceforth RGADA), *Krymskie dela*, kniga 13, fol. 348a; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 26-27.

³¹ MD 23, no. 130.

³² MD 44, no. 182, 190; MD 51, no. 10.

of Egyptian Circassian origin and originally related to Arslan's family.³³ It means that Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha was a member of the Kaytuks. Considering that the pasha was aware of his Kabardinian lineage and he was the supporter of an active Ottoman dominance of the North Caucasus and that he even proposed construction of fortresses in Kabarda, Ottoman support for the Kaytuks can be understood better. As such, Aslanbek, Gazi, and Kaplan of the Kaytuks helped the Ottoman armies and messengers traveling to Kefe from Derbend by building bridges on the rivers and providing them with food and other necessary items.³⁴

Due to the rising power of the Kaytuks and support they receive from the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars, Kanbulat of the Idars with the encouragement of Temriuk's son Mamstriuk petitioned for the Muscovite help in 1578. The Muscovite tsar once again accepted their petition and began supporting the Idars and their allies in Kabarda against the Kaytuks, who were also supported by the Tasoltans (Solokh's family). With Osman Pasha's departure from the North Caucasus in 1583 and his appointment as the grand vizier, Ottoman policy became more focused on the Daghestan. Another reason for the Ottomans to keep a keen eye on Daghestan was the problem of fugitive Crimean *hanzades* in Moscow and in the North Caucasus, as explained earlier. The Muscovites were planning to form an alliance with the *shamkhal* by using the persona of Murad Girey. These new developments facilitated the Muscovite plans to solidify their presence in Kabarda. With the help of Cossacks, the Muscovite officials managed to provide much needed support for their Kabardinian allies and

³³ Asafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi, *Şeca'atname*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2006), 379.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 379.

helped them keep their position in Kabarda in their rivalry against the chiefs of the Kaytuk and Tasoltan families.

With Ottoman focus shifting towards Daghestan and the construction of a Muscovite fortress at the mouth of the Terek River in 1588, Kabardinian politics underwent yet another change in favour of the pro-Muscovite Idars. At that time, Mamstriuk and Kudenek, son of Kanbulat, signed the *shert'* in Moscow and received guarantees that their rivals in Kabarda would be attacked if they insisted on supporting the Ottomans, Crimean Tatars, and the *shamkhal*. The Muscovite troops and Cossacks would now be able to support the Idars directly from the Muscovite fortresses in the region. However, the Kaytuks, specifically Aslanbek, were not easy targets and as mentioned above Muscovites first tried to lure Aslanbek by giving him gifts and other promises. Yet, he did not yield to the pressures. At the end, he was strong enough to get elected as the *pshihua* of Kabarda after the death of Kanbulat in 1589. This point is important because with the election of Aslanbek the position of *pshihua* passed from the Idars to the Kaytuks in 1589. It was the time when the Muscovite power was quite strong in Kabarda but Aslanbek was elected and he was still an ally of the Crimean khan and the Porte as reported by the Muscovites.³⁵ Obviously, the Muscovites at that time had no say or no influence over the elections. This also shows that Arslan, his family, and allies were still strong enough to challenge the Idars and even take the position of *pshihua* for themselves.

However, Aslanbek died in a few months after his election in the same year of 1589. The Muscovite influence and power in Kabarda would get to the strongest level after the

³⁵ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 112.

death of Aslanbek. At a time when the Muscovites gained the allegiance of the most Kabardinian chiefs and with the death of Arslan, his brother Yansokh, as explained above, had no choice but to ally with the pro-Muscovite party so that he would be elected as the *pshihua*. Yet, the position still remained in the family of the Kaytuks.

This was the situation in Kabarda at the death of Aslanbek. The Kaytuks were divided regarding their orientation. Yansokh allied with the pro-Muscovite chiefs to keep the title of *pshihua* in the family but other Kaytuk chiefs were still in contact with the Porte and the Crimeans. Their old time ally, the Tasoltan family, represented by Solokh continued to support the Porte despite his temporary alliance with the Muscovites. In the 1590s, it was obvious that the Kaytuks including Kazy, and Solokh were biding their time and watching the developments in Kabarda and in other parts of the North Caucasus, especially Daghestan, which would determine the outcome of the power struggle in Kabarda as well.

Encouraged by the setbacks after 1594 suffered by the Muscovites in Daghestan and the Ottoman support for anti-Muscovite chiefs, Kazy of the Kaytuks planned to get rid of the most fervent supporters of the Muscovites in Kabarda, sons of Temriuk: Mamstriuk and Domanuk. He invited them for a feast in his own settlement and put them in chains afterwards, eventually killing both of them.³⁶ With the elimination of Mamstriuk and Domanuk, the Idars lost their influence in Kabarda. The fact that Kazy was not punished by the Muscovites or Yansokh indicates that Muscovite power in Kabarda was on decline and the Kaytuks openly preferred that Muscovite presence be eliminated from the Kabardinian lands. For the Kaytuks and their allies, the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans were preferable to

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

the Muscovites because they did not establish fortresses or station troops in Kabarda. The Idars, on the other hand, invested in the direct Muscovite support as a guarantee of their power and dominance in Kabarda since the time of Temriuk. This fact was recorded in a Muscovite ambassadorial report. According to this report compiled in 1589, the main reason why Solokh disliked Mamstriuk and Kudenek was that the latter two “brought the Muscovite soldiers and fortresses into the Kabardinian territories.”³⁷

Eventually, it was both the Kaytuk and the Idar families and their allies who would lose the game and their independence in their own territories. Their lands were devastated several times by the Ottomans, Crimean Tatars, and Muscovites and their people were enslaved, taken hostage, or killed. Yet, what most of the Kabardinian chiefs tried to do through their manoeuvres and flirting with imperial powers surrounding them was to ensure their survival in their own lands rather than maximizing their material or political benefits.

5.2. Kansavuk and Sibok of the Janey Adyghes

Kansavuk and his son Sibok of the Janey are also didactic examples of the North Caucasus rulers and their intertwined relations with imperial powers in the Adyghe Circassian lands. Kansavuk was the strongest chief and ruler of the Janey in the sixteenth century until he was killed by the Ottoman forces in 1559 in one of his attacks on the Ottoman possessions in the Kuban region in alliance with the Zaporozhian Cossacks led by Vyshnevetskyi.³⁸ As known, Kansavuk was a *sancakbey* of the Porte in the northwestern Caucasus. This title with salary was granted to him by Süleyman I in 1539 as a part of the Ottoman carrot and stick policy in

³⁷ Ibid., 136.

³⁸ M. Sadık Bilge, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kafkasya* (Istanbul: Eren, 2005), 52.

the region. His realm was considered to be a *sancak* of the Ottoman Empire—theoretically an administrative area directly attached to the Porte. However, it would be misleading if one considers the title and sancak as being the same as normal Ottoman *sancaks* administrated from the centre. As explained earlier, these titles were a way of rewarding local rulers and cementing their submission to the Porte. With such titles, the local rulers received salary, support, and status from the Ottoman Porte. It is understood from Kanvasuk's conversation with Crimean Khan Sahib Girey in 1539 that Kansavuk pledged his allegiance to the Porte and promised to protect Ottoman subjects and possessions close to his realm with his own men. He claimed before the Crimean khan that he was able to muster an army of fifteen thousand men.³⁹

However, when he failed to keep his promise to the Porte, the Crimean khan raided his territories in accordance with the stick part of the Ottoman policy in the region. As remembered, Ottoman policy tend to restrict Crimean raids in the Kuban area to a great extent because of the Porte's intention to turn this area into a directly administrated region due to its closeness to the Ottoman Black Sea possessions. However, Kansavuk was targeted several times by the Crimean Tatars, who were more than ready to attack Circassian lands for slaves and booty whenever there was a chance. As such, the Porte used the Crimean Tatars effectively in order to persuade the Adyghe rulers to submit to the Porte and to protect the Ottoman possessions around the Black Sea, at least, not to raid them. Kansavuk's case was the same. The Porte expected absolute submission from Kansavuk and also other promises that were actually hard to keep. One of the promises he made was to protect Ottoman

³⁹ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han: Historie de Sahib Giray, Khan de Crimée de 1532 à 1551*, [with French translation by M. Le Roux], ed. Özalp Gökbilgin (Ankara: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1973), 39.

subjects and possessions. However, due to the peculiar structure of the North Caucasus societies, he was in no position to control other Adyghe tribes or order other chiefs not to attack the Ottoman possessions. Whenever he failed to prevent attacks, he was punished by the Crimean khan. Such was the situation and the pattern of relationship that Kansavuk had to deal with before the appearance in the region of the Muscovites as rivals to the Crimean khan.

In 1555, Kansavuk's son Sibok came to Moscow along with other representatives from Circassian tribes of the Kuban and Beshtav. Considering the situation Kansavuk was in, it was so normal that the Janeyts, who had been oppressed by the Crimean Tatars for slaves and other resources, would look for support from a newly emerging power interested in the North Caucasus. The Adyghe petitioned to be protected mainly from the Crimean Tatars, which was gladly accepted by the Muscovite tsar.⁴⁰ Sibok converted to Orthodox Christianity and took the Christian name Vasilii.⁴¹ As such, he made the *shert'* to serve the Muscovite tsar in the name of his people, the Janeyts.⁴²

In return, Muscovy offered the Janeyts military support through Vyshnevetskyi's Cossacks and encouraged them to engage the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans in the Kuban region by making them raid the Crimean and Ottoman territories. Kansavuk, Sibok, and the Janeyts along with other Adyghe were now utilized by Muscovy in the northwestern Caucasus while the Muscovites were busy with trying to create their own sphere of influence in Kabarda through their vassal Temriuk. The Porte and the khanate were in no position to

⁴⁰ *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4.

deal with the Kabardinian affairs because their hands were full in the northwestern Caucasus with the “rebellious Circassians and Cossacks.” While the Janeyts and other Adyghe Circassians fought against the Crimean and Ottoman forces in the area, the Muscovite policymakers’ preference of establishing their power base in Kabarda was noticed by the Adyghe chiefs. Sibok in these years realized that the Muscovites took advantage of their submission to the tsar and would abandon the Janeyts and other Adyghe in case of a direct reaction from the Ottoman Porte. In the early 1560s, the tide turned against the Cossacks and their allied Circassians, the Ottoman/Crimean forces began to rout them.

At this point, it was clear that the Janeyts would suffer from punitive Crimean and Ottoman raids into their territory because of their support for and alliance with Muscovy and the Cossacks. When Sibok realized the possibility of being abandoned by the Muscovites, especially due to the Ottoman involvement in the region, he thought that taking refuge in territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania along with Vyshnevetskyi would be a good move.⁴³ Soon after that, most possibly out of the new balance of power in the Adyghe lands, Sibok preferred to enter the service of the Crimean khan, which would provide the Janeyts with the protection they needed to survive. There is no record of Sibok’s conversion into Islam when he entered the service of the Crimean Khan. Therefore, he might have served the Ottoman/Crimean party against his former master, the Muscovite tsar, as an Orthodox Christian. What Kansavuk and Sibok did by changing their patrons several times was again not to maximize their benefits but to survive in their lands in the face of external pressures. As a *sancakbey* receiving a salary from the Porte, Kansavuk actually had a status within the

⁴³ E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh svyazi s Rossiei: Vtoraia polovina XVI-30-e gody XVII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk, 1963), 217.

Ottoman system, but due to the situation that he was unable to control and the readiness of the Crimean khan to obtain slaves, his lands were raided several times. This left him no choice but to look for support against the devastating punitive raids of the Crimean Tatars, which most of the time were supported by the Ottoman governors in Kefe and Azak because they received slaves in the form of gifts from the khan.⁴⁴ Muscovy at that point promised to provide them with the support they needed. However, one cannot say that the Janeys gained more out of their alliance with Muscovy than they had gained from the Porte. Sibok had to flee his own lands and eventually returned to Crimea to serve to the khan. In the mid-1560s, the situation for most of the Adyghe chiefs and tribes were the same as before the appearance of Muscovy and their alliance with it in 1552 and 1555—the Ottomans and Crimeans were the masters and Muscovite help was no longer available.

5.3. Urus of the Greater Nogays

Another local ruler to be discussed in this chapter is Urus Mirza (as of 1578-79,⁴⁵ Urus Bey) of the Greater Nogays. Although the Greater Nogays were not completely a part of the North Caucasus, the Nogay Horde's existence along the lower Volga and Yaik and Urus Mirza's activities were influential in North Caucasus affairs. The horde was an important factor in the balance of power in the region. The Ottomans knew its importance and tried to attract Urus

⁴⁴ Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Girey Han*, 38-39, 72. In 1542, it was the letter of the governor of Kefe that prompted the khan to raid the Janeys. The governor wrote, "The bey of the Janeys has not delivered the slaves that he promised to give each year and detained four of our men who were sent there to inquire about the slaves. He also captured some herds in the Taman island and he says, 'Let us see what the sultan and khan can do to me.' As such he made his intention known..."

⁴⁵ According to Khodarkovsky, Urus became the bey of the Greater Nogays in 1579, Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 120. Trepavlov says it was 1578, V. V. Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2002), 319; Kusheva states that the year was 1580 in her *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 262.

to their side and thus encircle the Muscovites in the North Caucasus and around Astrakhan. In the 1570s and 1580s the allegiance of Urus was also crucial for Muscovy as he was capable of posing serious dangers to the defence of Muscovite lands in the south.⁴⁶

Urus had been an ambitious character among the Nogay chiefs even when he was only a *mirza*. It was mentioned in Muscovite sources that even in 1569 during the Astrakhan campaign of the Ottomans, Urus was in contact with the Ottoman commander Kasım. He offered to support the Ottoman endeavour with his Nogays but explained that he would only serve the Ottoman Porte, but not the Crimean khan due to their ancient feuds.⁴⁷ This is also a good example to illustrate why the Crimean khan was sometimes a factor that hindered Ottoman designs in the North Caucasus. Only after five years in 1574, did Urus, who was still a *mirza*, relay through the governor of Azak his desire to be the subject of the Ottoman sultan.⁴⁸ However, at both times in 1569 and 1574, the Nogay Horde was still an ally of the Muscovites under İsmail Bey and Tinahmet Bey. According to V. V. Trepavlov what Urus wanted in these years and after 1578 was to stabilize the Greater Nogay Horde and revitalize its power that had been gradually circumscribed by the Muscovite forces along the Volga, Yaik, and in Astrakhan.⁴⁹ Urus realized that if he followed his father's and brother's policies, independence of the Greater Nogays would be lost completely as they were getting more and more dependent on Muscovy, especially economically. That means the survival of the Nogays would soon be in the hands of Muscovite officials. Unlike his father, İsmail Bey,

⁴⁶ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 121; Trepavlov, *Istoria nogaiskoi ordy*, 331.

⁴⁷ Report of Simon Maltsev (1569) published in P. A. Sadikov, "Pokhod Tatar i Turok na Astrahan' v 1569," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 22 (1947): 155-56.

⁴⁸ MD 26, no. 241.

⁴⁹ Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordyy*, 319-70.

Urus tried to multiply his choices for alliances and, when strong enough, change the established patterns of relations with Muscovy.

For Urus, the Ottoman Porte was one of the possible powers that could match the rising influence of Muscovy. Urus in 1569 and 1574 tried to by-pass the Crimean khan, whom he perceived as a rival and enemy, and directly communicate with the Ottoman Porte through its governors in Kefe and Azak. However, the Ottoman Porte was not sure about the real intentions of Urus Mirza and not knowledgeable enough to decide how to respond. For this reason, in 1574, the Porte advised the governor of Azak that he should consult with the Crimean khan with regards to the submission of Urus Mirza of the Greater Nogays.⁵⁰ When the Lesser Nogays settled in the area close to Azak as of 1557, there had sometimes been problems of plundering or unlawful activities until the Ottoman governors succeeded in restraining them.⁵¹ This initially unpleasant experience with the Lesser Nogays could explain the reluctance of the Ottomans to welcome the Nogays of Urus without consulting with the Crimean khan. The Greater Nogays could have brought about new problems in the north which, at that point, the Porte wanted to avoid. Yet, they also did not want the opportunity to utilize the Greater Nogays to slip away. We do not know the exact reaction and stance of the Crimean khan vis-à-vis this situation. However, we do know that it was Urus who in the 1560s had attacked some Crimean possession upon orders from his father İsmail Bey.⁵² Therefore, the Crimean khan might not have given a positive response as there were no

⁵⁰ MD 26, no. 241.

⁵¹ MD 24, no. 421; MD 28, no. 579.

⁵² Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 219.

further negotiations about the submission of Urus to the Porte in or after 1574 and indeed until the Ottomans campaign against the Safavids.

The year was 1578 when the Ottoman Porte welcomed any contributing forces to its armies against Safavid Iran. Urus' relations with the Muscovites were known but the Porte and the Crimean khan still asked him to join the invading Ottoman/Crimean armies in the South Caucasus, specifically for their operations in Shirvan.⁵³ Urus also accepted the opportunity for booty, slaves, and other gains that would strengthen his position in the horde and against the Muscovites. The services Urus Bey rendered at that time were greatly appreciated by the Porte. As a reward, he was given salary from the revenue of Azak. Apart from Urus, his *mirzas* who joined the Crimean Tatar army with their men against the Safavids received salaries from the revenue of Azak.⁵⁴ At this point, the Porte deliberately did not consult the Crimean khan because the Ottomans then were determined to secure their own position in the North Caucasus and the Greater Nogay *mirzas* were important players in the region.

Booty from the raids in Shirvan and the annuities that Urus and other Greater Nogay *mirzas* received from the Porte provided Urus with means of challenging the Muscovite encroachment. In these years, he also intensified his contacts with the Central Asian khanates and received an additional annuity from the Khanate of Bukhara.⁵⁵ Muscovy was then engaged on its western frontier and was not able to spare any troops to deal with Urus and his ambitious policies. By taking advantage of the international situation, Urus restored the broad

⁵³ MD 38, no. 98.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı*, 329.

autonomy of the Greater Nogays and their bargaining power in the early years of the 1580s. He was confident enough to write to Ivan IV in 1580 that his Nogays were now at war with Muscovy. He demanded that the Muscovite tsar should pay him annuities for Kazan and Astrakhan as well. These khanates had paid annuities separately to the Nogays and now they were both under Muscovite rule, so it was the tsar's responsibility to pay their dues.⁵⁶ Moreover, his Nogays raided Muscovite lands in 1580 with the Crimean Tatars and Lesser Nogays. Encouraged by his successes and Muscovites' inability to counteract at the time, Urus demanded more from the tsar as the price of peace on the steppe frontier. In 1581, he asked for 500 rubles as annuity, which was eventually accepted.⁵⁷

With no army to spare against the Nogays in the southern steppes, the Muscovites began to use their "wild card," that is, Cossacks. In the mid-1580s, as it was the case in the North Caucasus, Cossack activity along the lower Volga and Yaik intensified to such an extent that it forced Urus Bey to mend his ways with the Muscovites once more. These were the years that the Muscovites were extending their line of defence in the steppes by building new fortresses. Two of these fortresses were designed to control the Greater Nogay Horde. One was Tsaritsin between the Don and Volga and the other one was Yaik at the mouth of the Yaik River.⁵⁸ Thanks to these new fortresses and military pressure applied by the Cossacks, Urus Bey had no choice but to appease the Muscovite tsar. However, he still wanted to keep his options open. In 1586 Urus sent a letter of submission to the Ottoman sultan and petitioned him for support against the Muscovites with the help of the Crimean

⁵⁶ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 121-22

⁵⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁸ Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı*, 333; Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 123.

khan.⁵⁹ Yet, he did not receive the support he asked for because at that time the Greater Nogays were too distant as far as and the Porte was concerned and Ottoman armies were busy in the Caucasus. Urus also tried to form a united front against the Muscovites with the Khanate of Bukhara and the Porte by promising the sultan to bring the Volga, Yaik and Astrakhan under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. This plan was leaked to the Muscovites by a Nogay *mirza*, son of Tinahmet.⁶⁰

Despite all of his plans to free his horde from the Muscovite pressure that the Cossacks and new fortresses brought to bear, Urus had to give in and give the *shert'* to the Muscovites in the same year. His *shert'* stipulated that he would not join the military excursions of the Crimean Tatars against the Safavids.⁶¹ He also allied himself with Murad Girey, who was with the Muscovite tsar, and Murad's brothers in their struggle for the Crimean throne. The Muscovite officials were instrumental in forming this alliance. In a letter to Urus, Saadet Girey, Murad's brother, stated that Murad Girey received support from the Muscovite tsar in the form of thousands of *strel'tsy* that were put under his command. Saadet Girey asked Urus to help Murad Girey for his bid for the Crimean throne.⁶² Of course, the alignment of Urus with the fugitive Crimean *hanzades* further distanced him from the Crimean khan and the Porte. Yet, Urus did not want to alienate the Ottoman Porte. In his letter to the sultan dated 1587, he tried to justify his actions by saying that he was forced to join the Muscovite camp. He wrote that whoever controlled the Volga and Astrakhan

⁵⁹ RGADA, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 405b; Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı*, 370.

⁶⁰ Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 262.

⁶¹ Trepavlov, *Istoria Nogaiskoi Ordı*, 337.

⁶² Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza*, 264.

controlled the Greater Nogays Urus had no choice but to ally with the Muscovites and Murad for the sake his people's survival in the region.⁶³ This was actually true considering the activities of Urus even in 1586 and before. He really had no options but to give in to Muscovite pressure as no material support was given to him by the Ottomans.

The letter from Urus to the sultan evidently convinced the officials in the Porte. In the fall of 1587, the Ottomans planned a second campaign to take Astrakhan and put an end to the Muscovite dominance in the lower Volga. They were especially concerned about the Muscovite involvement in the Caucasus which by 1587 turned out to be a weighty problem because of the presence of a fugitive and rebellious Crimean *hanzade* in Astrakhan who was influential among many North Caucasus chieftains. The Ottomans thought that Urus Bey would play an important and very active role in this undertaking. On September 24, 1587, the Ottoman Porte sent Urus a letter in which he was asked to join the Ottoman campaign to "save Astrakhan from the Muscovite infidels in accordance with the requirements of his submission to the Porte." The letter was worded as if Urus Bey had always been a loyal subject of the sultan. He was also ordered to consult with Piyale Pasha who was appointed as the commander of the Ottoman army that would be sent to Astrakhan.⁶⁴ In the end, the campaign was not realized. After this, Urus Bey was involved in several battles against the Lesser Nogays which was epidemic in the steppes between these two Nogay hordes and in 1590 was killed in one of them.

⁶³ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 123; A. A. Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba Moskovskogo gosudarstva s Tatarami v pervoi polovine 17 v.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1948), 35.

⁶⁴ MD 62, no. 231.

If one reads about Urus Bey from the Muscovite sources only, the image that arises is that he was yet another unreliable nomadic figure in the southern steppes that submitted to the Muscovite tsar, received tsar's annuity and always complained about the amount being low and gifts being not enough. Yet, whenever he had a chance or support from another power, he did not hesitate to break his promises or even attack Muscovite lands. The Ottomans did not keep such detailed records about the Greater Nogay Horde and only letters sent to Urus Bey were preserved in their archives. However, it is understood from the Ottoman sources that the Porte wanted to use Urus and the Greater Nogays in their military undertakings in the Caucasus and their plans to capture Astrakhan but never considered him as a loyal subject of the sultan. The Ottomans were aware of the problems between the Crimean Khanate, Lesser Nogays, and the Greater Nogays. In the end, they preferred the Crimean Khanate and the Lesser Nogays, who were in the vicinity of Azak and by the 1580s totally subdued, to the Greater Nogays and turned a blind eye whenever Urus requested help against the Muscovites. Such help, especially at a time when the war in the Caucasus against the Safavids was on and Muscovite activities reached an alarming level with the support of the Cossacks in the North Caucasus and along the Don River, would be futile for the Porte and certainly not very realistic in terms of supply lines and other tactical calculations.

Up to the early 1580s, Urus wanted to revive Nogay power in the steppes, which had been greatly reduced by Muscovy. The Nogays were a nomadic nation and as such they were dependent on their sedentary neighbours for trade and survival. When there was only Muscovy to depend on through trade, annuities and gifts, their independence was greatly restricted. It was not greed that drove Urus into alliances with or submission to other powers

that were in the region but the notion of reviving Nogay power and continuing their old ways of living in the steppes without or with minimum restrictions.

Eventually, Urus died without being able to realize his objectives except for a brief period of time in the early 1580s when the Greater Nogay acted relatively independent of the Muscovite tsar. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Greater Nogays lost their power in the lower Volga and Yaik. Their population was either completely taken under Muscovite control or forced to migrate to the Crimean/Ottoman controlled areas in the west. At the beginning of the seventeenth, century they would be replaced by a new nomadic horde from the east, the Kalmyks.

5.4. Alexander II of the Kingdom of Kakheti

The last ruler that will be mentioned in this chapter is Alexander II of the Kingdom of Kakheti. There are abundant sources about the Kakheti Kingdom, Alexander II and his sons. However, for our purposes, this discussion will be restricted to Alexander II's relations with the Porte and Muscovy and his simultaneous submission. He entered the orbit of the Ottoman Porte in 1578 when the Ottoman troops invaded the Georgian lands that had been under the sovereignty of the Safavids. Facing a huge Ottoman army in 1578, Alexander II of Kakheti considered submission as the best way to avoid devastation of his lands and sent a letter of submission to Ottoman Commander Lala Mustafa Pasha in August 1578. In September of the same year, Alexander II visited the vizier himself in the camp of the Ottoman army on their way to Shirvan and once more submitted to the Porte in person.⁶⁵ Mustafa Pasha, in the

⁶⁵ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, MS, Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye Library, 4350, 86a-87a; Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlıların Kafkas ellerini fethi* (1451-1590) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993), 297.

name of the Ottoman sultan, “granted” Alexander II the Kingdom of Kakheti with the title of *beylerbeyi* (governor-general) and registered its people for *cizye*, making the kingdom a governor-generalship.⁶⁶ He also ordered Alexander II to supply men to the Ottoman army against the Safavids.

Compared with the Safavids, the Ottoman Porte came in with a more centralized structure and immediately began to form administrative districts in the southern Caucasus. These activities showed the local rulers such as Alexander II that the Ottomans were here to stay and their rule would be more centralized, which would eventually reduce the power of local rulers and their status in the region. Moreover, the Ottomans came with their formidable tax machine. Alexander II’s lands were already registered for *cizye* in September 1578. Apart from this, the Porte demanded 30 loads of silk, 10 slaves and 10 concubines as an annual tribute from the king.⁶⁷ In addition to these, King Alexander II was under the pressure of the *shamkhal* of Daghestan would increase his raids on the lands of the Kingdom of Kakheti in the forthcoming years.

Similar to the North Caucasus rulers in the Adyghe lands and in Kabarda, King Alexander II saw in Muscovy a possible source of support, which in turn showed an interest in Georgian affairs due to the strategic position of the Georgian Kingdoms and the fact that they shared the same Christian faith. The first recorded envoys to the Muscovite tsar from Alexander II came in 1586⁶⁸ when the Ottoman forces were fighting the Safavids, tension in

⁶⁶ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, 87a.

⁶⁷ Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, *Nusretname*, 88a-89b; *Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali ve Künhü'l-ahbar'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet devirleri*, ed. Faris Çerçi (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2000), 2: 293-95.

⁶⁸ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 203.

Europe with the Habsburgs was increasing, and Muscovite power in the North Caucasus was on the rise. In his petition to the Muscovite tsar, Alexander II asked for help against the *shamkhal* of Daghestan rather than against the Ottomans, perhaps knowing that Muscovites would not confront the Ottomans.⁶⁹ In 1588, the Muscovite envoys reached the Kingdom of Kakheti. The king made the *shert'* and agreed to pay an annual tribute.⁷⁰ The Muscovite activities in Kakheti alarmed the Safavids. They inquired about the situation through their envoy in Moscow.⁷¹ Yet, they were in no position to do anything about it. The Muscovite envoys visited Alexander II again in 1589-90 when the king one more time petitioned the Muscovite tsar to punish the *shamkhal*. By allying with the Muscovites against the *shamkhal*, the Georgian King was playing it smart. The objective of Alexander II was to have the *shamkhal's* power reduced or contained with the Muscovite help rather than getting support from the Muscovites against the Ottomans.

However, in the eyes of the Ottoman Porte, except its fortresses, where Ottoman troops were stationed, Kakheti was a province granted to its king, though his title was *beylerbeyi*. In 1589, the Ottoman fortress in Kakheti was attached to the new *eyalet* of Kutais administrated by a pasha directly appointed by the Porte. However, the pasha's authority was limited to the fortresses where the Ottoman soldiers were stationed and other Kakhetian lands were left to Alexander II.⁷² Therefore, some of the fortresses of Alexander II by 1589 were in the hands of the Ottomans. Since there were no raids on Alexander II's territories in these

⁶⁹ Ibid., 203.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13-45.

⁷¹ Ibid., 563.

⁷² MD 65, nos. 361, 378.

years, it is also understood that he paid tribute to the Porte in spite of the king's claims to the Muscovite envoys that he had been postponing its payment because of his expectation of Muscovite help.⁷³ Essentially, Alexander II's submission to the Muscovite tsar was a strategic move against the *shamkhal* and other North Caucasus rulers, especially those of the Kabardinians, who periodically raided his lands. Alexander II followed a policy best suited to protect his lands from invasion by the Ottomans and from raids of its semi-nomadic neighbours from the North Caucasus. He managed to materialize his first aim by submitting to the Ottoman sultan and agreeing to pay a yearly tribute and *cizye*. Alexander II also succeeded in containing his unruly northern neighbours including the Kabardinians and Daghestanis through Muscovite protection, which in the second half of the 1580s proved to be effective vis-à-vis the *shamkhal* and the Kabardinians.

Furthermore, Alexander II was successful in pursuing this kind of flexible policy even in the time of crisis such as the 1594 invasion of the shamkhalat lands by the Muscovites. In spite of his promises to send troops to help the Muscovite forces, he avoided participating in it, perhaps due to the letters he received from the Porte in which the Ottoman Porte ordered him to "help the *shamkhal* against the Muscovites as his submission required this sort of service."⁷⁴ Alexander II's case is also a good example of another local ruler who had to deal with multiple imperial powers to secure his position.

All of the local rulers mentioned in this chapter tried to survive in an area that was subject to imminent military action by one or more of the imperial powers in the second half of the sixteenth century, as well as protect themselves from their rival chieftains in or near

⁷³ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom*, 173.

⁷⁴ MD 72, no. 278.

their homeland. At first, the imperial powers that were eager to incorporate these lands were a possible source of economic and military support for those rulers against domestic rivals or neighbouring polities. Eventually, however, the North Caucasus players had no choice but to play double in order to survive in their own lands. Gifts and salaries from the Ottomans and Muscovites mattered little and were not the real reason behind the shifty policies of local rulers vis-à-vis the two main rival powers. In this chapter we have seen that an imperial rivalry could have different meanings from the local perspectives. The local rulers were not eager to serve the Muscovite tsar or Ottoman sultan, but they were forced to take a side. As we have seen, these rulers had certain similarities and differences in terms of their strategies and objectives, but all of them shared being regarded as *kul* or *kholop* by the officials in Istanbul or in Moscow respectively. It seems that the North Caucasus local rulers and some others in the area “rode all the horses” when viewed through Ottoman and Muscovite sources, but when those horses collided it was naturally their riders that were thrown to the ground.

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation presented an analysis and history of the first encounter between the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Muscovy in the second half of the sixteenth century, in a region until then by-passed by these great powers, that is, the North Caucasus. It has pointed out that while mainstream Turkish and Russian historiographies suffer from their respective nationalist approaches to the history of the North Caucasus and Ottoman and Muscovite designs over it, Western scholarship has a shortcoming that we call “source-bias” or “source one-sidedness.” Namely, most western scholars working on the history of the North Caucasus or imperial encounters in the region are able to read and consult Muscovite/Russian documents and scholarly works, but not the Ottoman/Turkish ones. Naturally this has resulted in one-sided presentations of the topic in many works of Western scholars. In addition to these, another common weakness of the studies on the history of the imperial rivalry over the region is that perspectives, perceptions, and strategies of local North Caucasus rulers and peoples have been ignored.

In order to deliver a a systematic, multi-source study this dissertation has relied mostly on primary sources, including documentary collections such as Ottoman *mühimme defters* and Muscovite *posol'skie knigi*, and sixteenth-century Ottoman and Muscovite chronicles. Besides offering a new interpretation on the imperial rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Muscovy from multiple perspectives and based on primary sources, the study has to given the reader some significant insights on the perspectives and

strategies of the local North Caucasus rulers and polities. Analyzing archival sources and chronicles of these two contesting powers in a comparative and critical way has allowed for a new glimpse at their own understanding and perception of the region, its polities, and peoples. This approach also helped us understand how the local rulers and their subjects responded to the imperial rivalry and what their objectives were and how their traditional political and social structures changed in the aforementioned period. As such, the study shed a new light on the history of the North Caucasus in the period from the arrival of the first envoys from the region in Moscow to the removal of the Muscovites from it by the Ottomans and their local allies.

It was in the second half of the sixteenth century that the North Caucasus was internationalized, its local social and political structures underwent swift and significant alterations, and its peoples' long lasting struggle for freedom actually began. It became a strategic prize that the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy wanted to use as a bulwark to protect their centrally administrated regions—the Black Sea possessions for the Ottomans, the lower Volga and Astrakhan for the Muscovites—and as a springboard for further expansion. The Ottomans were keen on furthering their conquests by “saving” Astrakhan, and the Muscovites were interested in controlling Kabarda and Daghestan. Initially, however, neither of these powers had tried to annex the region by force and turn it into a centrally administrated area, but they definitely desired to establish their suzerainty over the North Caucasus.

The Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars were content with a nominal claim of sovereignty in the region. Their relations with the local peoples and rulers were based on slave raids and tributes extracted from local rulers by the Crimeans. The Ottoman Porte

desired to maintain this status quo in the region except in the Adyghe lands that were on the Black and Azov Sea coasts where it tried to introduce its proper administration units and establish rule of law through their governors in Azak and Kefe. For the larger North Caucasus region, however, the initial concern of the Ottoman Porte even when Muscovy began its overtures in the region was to protect the status quo.

The North Caucasus, with the exception of Daghestan, had been one of the slave-harvesting fields for the Crimean Tatars. After the annexation of Astrakhan by the Muscovites in 1556, it was transformed into a disputed frontier zone between the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom of Muscovy. The Muscovites primarily intended to expand their authority over the North Caucasus through securing the allegiance of local rulers rather than forthright annexing their territories. Muscovy was a contender for the heritage of the Golden Horde and participant in the politics of the Pontic-Caspian steppes since its beginnings as an independent principality rather than an outsider or intruder.¹ For these reasons, Muscovite officials were more skilled in their relations with the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the steppes. This is also why the Muscovite steppe policy was more sophisticated and more coherent compared to the initially lax Ottoman northern policy. It is true that the Ottoman Turks had a steppe and nomadic background, but by the sixteenth century such origins were mere ancient tales. Indeed, as the present dissertation showed, this situation changed gradually in the second half of the sixteenth century as the Porte altered its policy toward the North Caucasus and the lower Don and Volga region to the north.

¹ Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovy and Kazan, 1445-1552: A Study in Steppe Politics" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1965).

Ottoman northern and Muscovite steppe policies may at times have appeared similar in their form, but they were essentially different in their methods and applications in the Black Sea steppes and in the North Caucasus. The main similarity was that both the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy opted to function primarily through their vassals in the steppes. This role was primarily fulfilled by the Crimean Tatars for the Ottoman Porte and by various Cossack groups for Muscovy. For sure differences outweighed the similarities. The most important one was that the Muscovites preferred to directly interfere in steppe affairs with their own military when the international conjuncture at any given time was favourable to them. This strategy of direct interference with troops and fortresses meant sooner or later direct control and colonization of the steppe lands and peoples. Some historians even draw parallels between this Muscovite strategy and the European colonization of the New World.² Co-optation was another distinctive Muscovite method and it went hand in hand with the direct involvement in steppe affairs strategy. Co-optation was designed to incorporate local elites into the Muscovite system, and by doing so, to turn them into loyal vassals of the Muscovite tsar.

Another difference was that while the Ottomans spent much time and resources to protect the balance of power between the northern states and the Crimean Khanate, the Muscovites were gradually altering this balance in their favour in line with their imperial ambitions over the former Golden Horde territories and over the Baltic region. The idea of balance of power within a larger Ottoman northern policy was focused on preserving the

² Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 226-27; Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland, "Russian Colonizations: An Introduction," in *Peopling The Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1-19.

balance between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy by manipulating their enmities. The Ottomans considered these northern states to be second-rate powers that their vassal, the Crimean khan, could handle.³ They definitely did not want to see amicable relations between Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy that could negatively affect the status quo in the north and put the Crimean Khanate in a vulnerable situation.

When we look at the general picture of the Pontic-Caspian steppes in the sixteenth century until a mature Ottoman policy in the north, specifically in the North Caucasus, came into existence, it can be said that the Muscovite officials proved to be better in steppe politics than the Crimean khan or the Ottomans as Muscovite methods and strategies were more effective and produced faster results. Thus, before the Muscovites were challenged directly by the Ottoman Empire, these strategies and methods enabled them to expand in a short time over the territories that once belonged to the Golden Horde at the expense of the Crimean Khanate.

From the perspective of the Ottomans, the Muscovite take-over of Kazan and Astrakhan and their ambition to expand further into the Pontic-Caspian steppes and specifically the North Caucasus disturbed the balance in the north in the second half of the sixteenth century. In response to this challenge from the north, the Ottomans decided to take an active stand in the North Caucasus and put an end to the Muscovite designs over the region and presence in the lower Volga area. From the perspective of the Muscovites, the

³ Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı hakimiyetinde Kefe: 1475-1600* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000), 57-58; Halil İnalçık, "Power Relations between Russia, the Crimea and the Ottoman Empire as Reflected in Titulature," in *Turco-Tatar Past Soviet Present: Studies Presented to Alexandre Benningsen*, ed. Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, and E. Wimbush (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes études en Sciences sociales, 1986): 175-215; Halil İnalçık, "Struggle for East-European Empire, The Crimean Khanate, Ottomans and the Rise of the Russian Empire," *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 21 (1982): 1-16.

second half of the sixteenth century was the first time their Tsardom faced the danger of confronting the Ottoman Empire in a shared frontier zone.

Thus, when the Muscovites began to lay the groundwork for a possible expansion into the North Caucasus following their conquest of Astrakhan in 1556, they faced realities that were different from what they had experienced until then with the nomadic and semi-nomadic populations and polities in the steppes. Besides trying to establish their suzerainty over the fundamentally diverse political and social structures that existed in the North Caucasus, the Muscovites had to formulate strategies to deal with a direct Ottoman challenge to their imperial ambitions. Facing such a danger and knowing their own strength and limitations, the Muscovite officials initiated a policy of avoidance of conflict with the Ottoman Porte. This Muscovite strategy lasted until 1676 when the Ottomans decided to place Ukraine under their rule through their vassal Hetman Petro Doroshenko.

As the Muscovite officials considered the North Caucasus within the framework of their steppe policy, it can be said that the Muscovite expansion into the North Caucasus would be active, well-defined, and defensive against the Porte. As such, they began to create their sphere of influence in the North Caucasus by applying their steppe policy that centered on designating one of the strong local rulers in the area as a trustworthy vassal and envisaged direct intervention when possible through their own forces and by constructing fortresses.

The steppe policy of Muscovy, which had been a success over the Turkic steppe powers, turned out to be ineffective when applied to the North Caucasus polities because of quite different social and political realities compared to the Turkic peoples of the steppes and geographical conditions of the region as well as the Ottoman designs over it. Although

Muscovite officials learned a great deal about the region and its complexities through their short-lived attempts at dominating the North Caucasus, it took more than a century (until the end of the reign of Peter I) for them to alter their strategies in the region.

On the other hand, placing the North Caucasus under the Crimean Khanate and only controlling directly from Kefe and Azak the westernmost Adyghe tribes proved to be an inadequate policy for the Ottomans. The shortcomings of this policy manifested themselves in the late 1550s and early 1560s when some of the Adyghe and Kabardinian tribes joined the Zaporozhian Cossacks and, with the blessings of the Muscovites, raided the Ottoman/Crimean territories. Therefore, the initial Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus was based on the Ottomans' long term understanding of the north. The Crimean khans were considered nominal sovereigns over the region with broad powers to punish local populations when they deemed it necessary.

It has been shown that the Ottoman Porte applied a carrot and stick policy for the local chiefs in the region. If a chief was obedient and loyal, he was granted salary from the revenues of Kefe or Azak and titles along with a banner and other forms of investiture. In case a chief failed to fulfill their promises, the Crimean khan was sent there to punish him and plunder his lands and people. Indeed, the khans always welcomed such punitive opportunities as it was an opportunity for them to raid for above all slaves and other booty. With the rise of Muscovite power, the Ottomans, especially during and after the second half of the sixteenth century, felt the need to modify their northern policy in the North Caucasus in accordance with the intricacies and *sui generis* characteristics of this region.

With the rise of Muscovy and the threat it posed to Ottoman and Crimean possessions, not only directly but through Cossacks and its vassals in the North Caucasus, officials at the Porte led by Sokullu Mehmed Pasha decided to change the course of Ottoman northern policy. The Ottomans tried to dominate the region mainly through the governors of Azak and Kefe with an eventual aim of taking Astrakhan and controlling the North Caucasus and lower Volga. This would of course give great leverage to the Porte against the Safavids and Muscovites, while connecting the Ottoman Empire with the Sunni Muslim Central Asian states. Since the need for change was triggered by developments in the North Caucasus, the Porte formulated an active policy specifically designed for the North Caucasus polities and tribes. It was this policy that constituted the basis of future Ottoman involvements not only in the North Caucasus but in the broader Black Sea steppes in the forthcoming centuries.

Furthermore, this study has shown that the arguments about the Ottoman Porte being uninterested in the developments in the north (Muscovy, Kazan, etc.) and in the Black Sea steppe regions (Astrakhan, the Cossacks, the Nogays), as it is frequently stated in Turkish and Western historiography, are not borne out by the evidence. Before Muscovy proved itself to be a power to be reckoned with in the north as of the second half of the sixteenth century, Ottoman northern policy was defensive as the Ottomans were content with the fact that the Black Sea was their *mare nostrum* and they were able to secure the flow of wealth from its regions to their capital.⁴ However, due to the above-mentioned international dynamics that came into being in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans actively employed

⁴ Victor Ostapchuk, "The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the face of the Cossack Naval Raids," *Oriente Moderno* 20 (2001): 23-95; Victor Ostapchuk, "The Ottoman Black Sea Steppe Frontier and the Struggle for a New Order in Eastern Europe, 1648-1681," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* (forthcoming); Halil İnalcık, "The Question of the Closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans," *Arşivler ve Tarih* 35 (1979): 74-110, esp. 74.

their agents in the north and used every possible means of gathering information about the northern affairs, and specifically the North Caucasus, in order to establish their sovereignty in the region. As such, the Ottoman Porte began to grasp the complexities and intricacies of the North Caucasus, especially after 1569.

Following the Astrakhan campaign of 1569, both the Ottomans and the Muscovites preferred to confront each other through their vassals in the North Caucasus. While the Muscovites considered a conflict with the Porte too risky, the Ottomans thought that a war in the northern frontier was too costly—there would be little or no return. That is why the both Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire relied on the instrument of a plausible deniability on their common frontier. Accordingly, conflicts between their vassals in the Pontic-Caspian steppes and in the North Caucasus did not affect the presumably amicable relations between these two imperial powers.⁵ The Ottoman Empire or Muscovy protested the raids carried out by Cossacks or the Crimean Tatars respectively but they did not see such raids or attacks as cause for all out war, and thus, there was no direct Ottoman-Muscovite military confrontation in the second half of the sixteenth century. Muscovy did not even send a force against the Ottoman army in 1569 when the latter set off to capture Astrakhan. As such, we can say that there was a neutral space that the Ottoman Porte and especially the Tsardom of Muscovy intentionally created and maintained in the North Caucasus.

The Ottoman-Safavid War of 1578-1590 further boosted the authority of the Ottoman sultan in the region. During this period, the North Caucasus became a supply route for the

⁵ Brian James Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20-23; Brian James Boeck, “Shifting Boundaries on the Don Steppe Frontier: Cossacks, Empires and Nomads to 1739” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002), 11-12.

Ottoman armies fighting against the Safavids in the Caucasus. Several Ottoman officials were the advocates for a more active Ottoman policy in the North Caucasus. Among these were Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, Lala Mustafa Pasha, and Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, who added new features to Ottoman policy and strategies in the region. They used several new strategies, including marriage such as the marriage of Osman Pasha to the daughter of the ruler of the Avars, or direct military intervention in subduing local rulers. Especially Osman Pasha is remembered for the lobbying of construction of several fortresses in Kabarda to protect Ottoman interests in the North Caucasus. Overall, the new Ottoman policy was effective, diplomatic, and pragmatic in its nature. With the application of this new policy and thanks to its ability to wield sufficiently formidable military power in the North Caucasus, the Porte was able to deter Muscovy from attempting and intervention, and thereby was able to strengthen its authority in the North Caucasus.

Leaving the various Muscovite and Ottoman strategies in the North Caucasus aside, the most important difference between them was that despite being better formulated and more active compared to their earlier laxer policy, Ottoman policy was still negatively affected by the slow and complicated workings of the very apex of the Ottoman state—the Imperial Divan. Those Ottoman statesmen who tried to consolidate Ottoman control over the region were unable to alter this characteristic of the Porte. In spite of his far-sightedness that was aided by his knowledge of the region and in spite of his subsequent appointment as the Grand Vizier, even Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha fell short of obtaining the Porte's permission to construct fortresses there. In comparison with Muscovite policy, which survived changes of tsars and officials, regional governors, and even dynastic struggles, Ottoman policy was too dependant on the personal opinions of influential figures in the Imperial Council and the

Crimean khan. The latter was particularly concerned at the prospect of an Ottoman-controlled North Caucasus due to the region's value as a source of slaves and the fact that centralized Ottoman domination over the region would mean containment of the khanate. In contrast, swift decision making process in their dealings with the local polities was an intrinsic characteristic of Muscovite policy. Muscovite policy was determined by a close circle of statesmen around the Muscovite tsar and left no room for other officials to object. That is why they were able act quickly and resolutely and erect wooden fortresses in the area in a very short time and compete with the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars at a surprisingly equal level despite their military inferiority in the face of the Ottomans. This was even in the last decades of the sixteenth century, when the North Caucasus was a crucial supply route for Ottoman armies.

Furthermore, while the Ottomans and Muscovites were utilizing every possible means to dominate the North Caucasus, they were also modifying the local political structures of the region. Their involvement altered the internal dynamics of the polities in the North Caucasus. Each power had its vassals and through them they brought about new political forms to the region. Local chiefs in the Adyghe, Kabarda, or Daghestani lands were forced to take sides because those with no support were unable to defend themselves against the chiefs who received military or material support from one of the contenders in the region.

Therefore, as of the second half of the sixteenth century, in order to survive in their own lands, the North Caucasus chiefs had to pledge their allegiance to one of the imperial powers. It is true that salaries, titles, and gifts from the Porte or from Muscovy were important and contributed to the prestige and power of the local rulers. However, those gifts and salaries usually came at a price: loss or restriction of their freedom. When the local

rulers—at least some of them—realized this fact, it was too late for them to reverse the situation or unite against a major power without the support of another major power.

Moreover, as the Ottomans and Muscovites preferred not to confront each other directly, they would rather compete through proxies, local chiefs allied with them. The situation from the local rulers' perspective was a rather desperate one in which they had to take an oath of allegiance for either the sultan or the tsar or both. Those who refused to submit were punished and those who submitted risked punishment by the other power or revolt and attack by its own regional vassals.

Thanks to their effective policy in the North Caucasus, the Ottomans eventually managed to extend their domination to the whole North Caucasus after repulsing two Muscovite offensives aimed at controlling Daghestan at the most inopportune time—in 1594 and 1604-5 when they were at war on their western and eastern frontiers against the Habsburgs and Safavids respectively. The Muscovite attempt to break the Ottoman power there by establishing their suzerainty over Daghestan failed and resulted in their complete retreat from the North Caucasus for the time being.

However a real threat to Ottoman domination in the North Caucasus, especially in Daghestan came in the first half of the seventeenth century from their old foe, namely, the Safavids. The newly crowned Safavid shah Abbas was determined to re-take all the territories that they had lost to the Ottomans at the end of the war of 1578-1590. As a part of their offensive against the Ottoman Empire that started in 1603, in addition to the Georgian Kingdoms in the South Caucasus, the Safavids this time targeted the Daghestani principalities as well. As a result of this offensive, the Ottomans had to fight on both the

western and eastern frontiers as they had already been at war with the Habsburgs as of 1593. Despite losing the territories that they had annexed in the South Caucasus in 1590, the Ottomans were able to secure their domination over the North Caucasus including Daghestan.

In the final analysis, if one looks at the outcome of this first round of imperial rivalry in the second half of the sixteenth century from the perspective of the local chiefs and peoples, it was neither Ottomans nor the Muscovites who would lose, but rather the local polities, peoples, and rulers of the North Caucasus. They became dependent on the power and strategies of these two empires, which altered their political structures. From the perspective of the major powers, at the turn of the century, the Ottoman Porte was in charge in the North Caucasus.

Appendix I

A. Ottoman version of Selim II's letter to Ivan IV dated 1570. Ahmed Feridun Bey, *Münşaatü's-Selatin* (Istanbul, 1275/1858-1859), 460-61.

﴿ جواب ﴾

عنه عليه عدد التت عنوان وسده سنه سعادتنا نزهه که ملجأ سلاطین جهان و مرجع خواقین
دوران نام ایلیچیکز واسطه سیله نامه مخالفت یساکیز وارد اولوب قدیم الایامدن آباء کرام
واجداد عالی نژاد ذوی الاحزان انا را الله بر اهنهم زمان سعادت انجا ملرنده سده سدره
مقاملرینه موالات تام اوزره اولغین حالادخی آستانه سعادته نوا نزهه ته نیت و عرض خلوص
ایچون مومی الیه آد مکر کوند ریلوب ونواب کامیابیز ایله عساکر نصرت نصابیز حاجی ترخان
جانبلرینه واروب داخل اولدوغین اعلام الشمس هر نه که تحریر اولنوب مومی الیه
آد مکر تقریر ایلش ایه پایه سریر عالم مصیر مزه عرض اولنوب علم شریف عالم ارای
ملوکانه مزعلی وجه الکامل محیط وشامل اولمشدر ایددی اعتبار سلطنت ما بن قدیمدن
اعدا واحبابه دوستلق دشمنک یوزندن مفتوح الایوایدن کمال اخلاصه انتساب ایدن
سلاطین صداقت نصاب خراین وممالک تسلیله حریم صلحه داخل اولوب عنایات خسروانه
والنفات ملوکانه مز ایله کامران وآستان عالی شانزه انجا ایدن سائر تاجداران مایینده
محسود الاقران اوله کلشدر مکتوب مخالفت شعار کرده اشعار ایتدو ککر اوزره اکر
سده سعادت والار بنیزه واسکر اولیاء دین ودولتزه خلوص نیت وصفاء طویت ایله
موالاته ثابت قدم ومصافاته را مخدوم اولور سکر سز دخی اضعا ف مضاعف النفات
شاهانه وعنایات پادشاهانه مزه مظهر اولمکر مقرر ومحققدر وحاجی ترخان جانبلرینه که
عسکر نصرت ارمز کوند ریش ایدی مرحوم ومغفور له جدم سلطان محمد خان غازی
انار الله برهانه کفه ولایتی فتح ایدلدنبرو ولایت قریم خانلری وممالک چرا کسه بانلری
آستان کیتی ستانزه اطاعت و اظهار عبودیت قیلوب الی هذا الان هریری نظر فرخنده
اثر مز ایله منظور و کامران و اکثری سنجاع هما یونمز ایله تعدی اعدا دن مصون ومأمون
محسود الاقران اولوب فرمان قضا جریانمز صدور ایتدو کی اموره علی ماهو المأمور
بذل مقدور ایدر بکلر وقوالر مز اولمشدر ایکن ممالک محروسه مزه داخل قبارتای ولایتده
قدیمی الفت ومحبتة محل قلعه احداث اولدوغندن ما اعدا حاجی ترخان جانبلرینه
دشت فیضاق وما وراء النهر مسلمانلری کلوب کلوب بو جانیه مرور و کذران ایتدو کاری
یوللری آد ملر کز سد ایلدکلرین اول اول جانبلرک امراء وسلاطینی عموما درگاه عالم پناهیزه
اعلام وانها قیلوب استد عای عون وعنایت والتماس حیات وصیانت ایلکین اولجانبده

اولان قلاع و بقاع احواله و سایر امور و وقوف و اطلاع نیتنه جناب اما رتآب ایالتنصاب
قریم خانی دامت معالیه به بعضی امراء ذوی الاقدار قوللرمدن بر مقدار عسکر جرار
دشمن شکار ارسالنه باعث اولش ایندی مقدمه و حالبا دخی مشارالیه قریم خانی دامت
معالیه اولجانبه و ران ایلیجیسی درت بش یسلدنبرو ولایتکرده عوق اولتوب کبر و عودنه
رخصت و یرلدوکی موالات قدیمه و مصافات مستدیمه به محل وضع ایکن عسکر نصرت
اثر طغر نوغز ایله اولجانبه آقین مراد ایتدیکجه رخصت و اجازت همایون و یرلبوب محضا
بوجانبه خلوص و موالاتکر شایع اولغین نیجه دفعه منع و دفع اولتمق واقع اولشد و بالجمله
سرحدسزده ایکی یسلیق سفر تبارکی مقرر ایکن بمجرد اولطرقق احوال و امور یسند و وقوف
و شعور ایله اکتفا اولتوب عسکر طغر اثر سعادت مند مر طرفندن ولایتکردن هیچ بر محله
خلوص و موالاته محل ضرر و کزند واقع اولمشد و یربناء علیه مومی الیه آدمکر ادا رسالت
وارکان سفارتی کایینی ادا و رعایت ایلد کدنصکره کبر و اولجانبه عودت ایتدیر اشد
کر کد رکه نامه همایون و وصول بولدقده مکتوب محالست محضو بکر ایله عرض اولندوغی
اوزره قواعد و داد مشید و مبائی اتحاد مؤید اولوب حاجی ترخان یولنی اچوب و موالات
قدیمه بی اخلاص باعث ماینده قیارتای ایچنده حادث قلعه بی رفع ایلبوب اولدیاردن مرور
و عبور ایدن ره روان احسن و اسان و جهله امین و سالم کذران ایلبوب ممالک محروسه مره
کچوب و مشارالیه قریم خانی دامت معالیه ک ذکر اولسان ایلیچیسند اجازت و یرلبوب
کبر و مملکت و ولایت عودت ایتدیر لبوب طرفیندن اولان محضالت قوی البیان و بنیان
موالفت سدید الارکان مههد و استوار و یوقاعده مرضیه نسلا بعد نسل محکم پایدار اولوب
فراغ بال و جمهور رعایا و رفاهیت حال عامه برابا بر نوعله منتظم اوله که انک قواعد و ضوابطنه
انقطاع دوران و انقراض زمانه دکن احتمال خلل و فتور و تنهن و قصور بول بولیه و السلام

text:

‘Atabe-i ‘ulya-i adālet-ünvān ve sūdde-i seniyye-i sa‘ādet-niṣānımuza ki melce’-i selatīn-i cihān ve merce’-i hevākin-deverāndır ... nām ilçiniz vāsıtasıyla nāme-i muḥālasat peyāmınız vārid olub kadīmü'l-eyyāmdan ābā’-i kirām ve ecdād-ı ‘ālī nijād-ül-iḥtirāmımız enara’llah berahinihüm zamān-ı sa‘ādet-encāmlarından sūdde-i sidre maḳāmlarına muvalāt-ı tāmm üzere olmagın ḥālā dāḥi āsitāne-i sa‘ādet ‘ünvānımuza teḥniyet ve ‘arz-ı ḥulus için mümaileyh adamıñuz gönderilüb ve nuvvāb-ı kāmyābımız ile ‘asākir-i nuṣret-neṣābımız Hācı-Tarḥan cāniblerine varub dāḥil oldugun ‘ilām itmişsiz her ne tahrir olunub mümaileyh adamıñuz takrīr itmiş ise pāye-i serīr-i ‘ālem-masīremize ‘arz olunub ‘alem-i şerīf ‘ālem-i ārāy-ı mülūkhanemüze ‘ala vechü'l-kāmil muḥīt ve şāmil olmuşdur imdī ‘itāb-ı saltānat-me‘abımıza kadīmden ā’dā ve aḥıbbāya dostluk düşmanlık yüzünden meftūhü'l-ebvābdır kemāl-i iḥlāşla intisāb iden selaṭeyn-i şadāḳat-nisāb ḥezā’in u memālik

teslîmiyle harîm-i şulha dâhil olub ‘inâyet-i hüsrevâne ve iltifât-ı mülûkanemüz ile kâmrân ve âsitân-ı ‘âlîşânımıza ilticâ iden sâ’ir tâcdârân mâbeyninde maḥsudu’l-akrân ola gelmişdür mektûb-ı muḥâlaşat şî‘ârınızda iş‘âr itdügünüz üzere eger sūdde-i sa‘âdet ve alâ rütbetimize ve eger ulyâ’-i dîn ve devletimize ḥulûs-u niyet ve şafâ’-i ṭaviyyet ile muvâlatda sabit-kadem ve muşâfatda rasiḥdem olursanız siz daḥi iz‘âf-ı müzâ‘if iltifât-ı şâhâne ve ‘inâyet-i pâdişâhânemize mazhar olmanız muḥarrer ve muḥakḳaktır ve Hacı Tarḥân câniblerine ki ‘asker-i nuşret-eserimiz gönderilmiş idi merḥum ve maḡfûrlu ceddüm sultân Meḥmed Hân Gâzi enâra illahi berhanihu Kefe vilâyetini feth idildinberü vilâyet-i Kırım ḥânları ve memâlik-i Çerâkise bânları âsitân-ı gitû-setânımıza itâ‘at ve izhâr-ı ‘ubûdiyyet kılub ala’ haẓa elân her biri nızâr-ı ferḥunde eserimiz ile manẓur ve kâmrân ve ekseri sancağ-ı ḥumayûnumuz ile ta‘addi-i ‘âdâdan maşûn ve me’mûn ve maḥsûdû’l-akrân olub fermân-ı kazâ ceryânımız şudûr itdiği umûrda ‘ala mâhuve’l-ma’mûr bezl-i maḳdûr ider begler ve kûllarımız olmuşlar iken memâlik-i maḥrûsamıza dâhil Kâbartay vilâyetinde kadîmi ulfet ve muḥabbete muḥil ḳal‘a ihdâs olduğundan mâ‘adâ Hacı Tarḥân câniblerinden Deşt-i Kıpçak ve Maverâ’ün-nehr müslûmânları gelüb geçüb bu cânibe murûr ve güzârân itdükleri yolları adamlarınız sedd itdüklerin ol câniblerin ümarâ’-i selâtini ‘umumen dergâh-ı ‘âlem-penâhımıza ‘ilâm ve inhâ kılub istid‘â-i ‘avn ve ‘inâyet ve iltimâs-ı ḥimâyet ve şıyânet iylemegin ol câniblerde olan ḳala’ ve bıḳâ‘ ahvâline ve sâir umûra vukûf ve itlâ‘ niyetine cenâb-ı emâret-me’ab eyâlet-nişâb Kırım Hânı dâme me‘âlihuya ba‘zı umerâ’-i zû’l-iktidâr kullarımızdan bir miḳdâr ‘asker-i cerrar düşman-şikâr irsâline ba‘iş olmuş idi muḳaddeman ve ḥâliya daḥi müşarüileyh Kırım Hânı dâme me‘âlihu ol cânibe varan ilçisi dört beş yıldan berü vilâyetinizde ‘avḳ olunub gerü ‘avdete ruḥşat verilmediği muvâlât-ı kadîme ve muşâfat-ı müstedîmeye muḥil vaz’ iken ‘asker-i nuşret-eser zafer-numunemüz ile olcânibe akın murâd itdükce ruḥşat ve icâzet-i ḥumayûn virülmeyüb maḥza bu cânibe ḥulûş ve muvâlâtınız şâyî‘ olmağın nice def‘a men’ ve def‘ olunmak vâḳi’ olmuşdur ve bi’l-cümle serḥaddimizde iki yıllık sefer tedâriki muḥarrer iken mücerred ol ṭarafın ahvâl ve umûruna vukûf ve şu‘ûr ile iktifâ olunub ‘asker-i zafer-eser-i sa‘âdet-mendemiz ṭarafından vilâyetinizden hiç bir maḥale ḥulûş ve muvâlâta muḥil zarar ve gezend vâḳi’ olmamışdır binâ’an ‘aliyye mümaileyh adamlarınız âdâb-ı risâlet ve erkân-ı sefâreti kemâyenbağı edâ ve ri‘âyet iyledikdensönra gerü ol-cânibe ‘avdet itdürülmüşdür gerekdir ki nâme-i ḥumayûnum vusûl buldukda mektûb-ı muḥâlaşat-maḥsûbuñuz ile ‘arz olunduğu üzere kavâ‘id ve dâd-ı müşeyyed ve mübânî’ ittiḥâd mü’eyyid olub Hacı Tarḥân yolunu açub ve muvâlât-ı kadîmiyyeyi ihlâle bâ‘iş mâbeynde Kâbartây içinde ḥâdiş ḳal‘ayı ref’ iyleyüb oldiyârdan murûr ve ‘ubûr iden râh-ı revân isân ve âsân vechle e’mîn ve sâlim güzârân idüb memâlik-i maḥrûsamuza geçüb ve müşarileyh Kırım Hânı dâme me‘âliyuehunun zikr olunan ilçisine icâzet virülüb gerü memleket ve vilâyetine ‘avdet itdürülüb ṭarafından olan muḥâlaşat-ı kuvva-i bünyân ve bünyân-ı mu’âlefe-i sedîdû’l-erkân-ı mümeḥhed ve ustubar ve bu ḳa‘ide’-i marziyye naslen ba‘ad-i nesl muḥkem ve pâyidâr olub ferâğ-ı bâl ve cumḥûr-u re‘âyâ ve refâhiyyet-i ḥâl ‘âmme-i berâyâ ber nev‘ale münteẓim ola ki anuñ kavâ‘id ve zavâbatına inḳıtağ-ı devrân ve inḳırâz-ı zamâna degin ihtimâl ḥalel ve futûr ve naḳz ve ḳuşûr yol bulmaya ve’s-selam.

translation:

Your letter with your honest message to our threshold known with the highest justice and to our Porte marked with felicity, which is the refuge for the kings of the world and the house of the *hākans*, arrived with your ambassador named [Novosiltsev]. [In this letter] you say that you sent aforementioned man of yours to inform our threshold renowned with its felicity of your congratulatory greetings and your petition of cordiality in accordance with [the fact] that from the ancient times and from the auspicious times of our illustrious fathers and our venerated ancestors of noble lineage—may God illuminate their manifestations—you have been ready to offer your complete support to [our] offices of the exalted Porte. You have also informed [us] that our victorious representatives and [with God's help] victorious soldiers reached [the direction of] Astrakhan. Whatever was written [by you] and repeated by your aforementioned man has been known to the foot of our throne, the abode of the world, and has been, in a complete manner, understood by our noble royalty adorned by the world. Now, from the old times, those kings with loyalty who submit with a mature sincerity to our benevolent court [of refuge] which is open door[s] to enemies and beloved friends for enmity and friendship are adjoined to those who attain the state of peace that is restricted to the selected ones with the granting of treasures and countries [by the Porte] and to those who become prosperous through blessing and favor of our royalty and to those who are adorned [thanks to] their virtue of being among other kings that find refuge at our exalted threshold. In accordance with what your truthful letter conveys [in writing], if you are to be at the front line of being ready to support and be unwavering in your amity with your earnest desire and clear affectionate devotion to our threshold of the highest felicity and to our noble religion and state, it has been determined and is certain that you too will be honored with our constantly increasing magnificent blessings and our royal grace. And our victorious soldiers were sent to the direction of Astrakhan. Since my late and already forgiven [by God for his sins] ancestor Sultan Mehmed Han Gazi—may God illuminate his proof—conquered the province of Kefe, the country of the Crimean khans and Circassians lands have submitted and have displayed subservience to our threshold of the world. After this and also presently each of them, [thanks to] our worldly wisdom of felicitousness, are envied and prosperous, and most of them, being protected from and are fearless against enemy attacks [by carrying] our imperial banner, [and as such they are] envied by their peers. And while they have been begs and our slaves [*kullarımız*], who in accordance with how our orders appear and on that they are prosperous with much power granted to them; in addition to construction of a fortress in the province of Kabarda—a part of our well-protected domains—which violated the ancient terms and fraternity, that your men have blocked the roads through which the Muslims of Desht-i Kipchak and Transoxiana used to reach this side [through Astrakhan] has been appealed by all the rulers of those lands to our Porte, which is the refuge of the world. Their petition for help and our favor of protection caused [us] to send his honorable Excellency of proper governing Crimean Khan—may his court endure—who knew well the fortresses and buildings [the whole territory] in

those areas with some of our powerful begs and with a number of devastating and enemy-hunting soldiers. And despite [the fact] that previously and also presently the envoy of the aforementioned Crimean khan—may his court endure—has been detained in your country and not been given permission to return is an act that is not in conformity with the old amity and perpetual devotion and he [the Crimean khan] desires to raid those [Muscovite] lands with our soldiers who are the embodiment of victory; he has not been given permission or an imperial diploma. And [the khan's request for permission to raid] has been refused and stopped many times, only because your devotion and amity to us is well-known. And having campaign materiel stocked for two years on all our frontiers and knowing the situation and conditions of those directions [lands] well, our victorious soldiers of our felicitousness did not bring any destruction or harm, adverse to sincerity and amity, to any parts of your country. Consequently, aforementioned man of yours observed the rules of his duty and formalities of the embassy, as best it may be, and following this he has been sent back to your side. It is necessary that upon the arrival of my imperial letter, in line with what your sincere letter conveyed, by corroborating to strengthen and act in conformity with the given-principles and amity, you should open the Astrakhan road and demolish the fortress in Kabarda which is a breach of the ancient fraternity and, by being benevolent and easing, allow those travelers who pass through those lands to our well-protected domains in safety. And you should give permission to the aforementioned envoy of the Crimean khan—may his court endure—and return him [back] his country. You should keep your amity [to us] strong and in its orderly and proper place and be constant and firm, generations after generations, to observe these well-liked principles. And as such, you will attain easement [from anxiety] and your mass of flocks [*re'āyā*] and your whole nation's [state of] welfare will be absolute. These principles and norms are not to be harmed or disrupted by weakness and shortcomings or failure until the demolishment of the world and end of time.

B. Letters and orders from the Porte regarding plans for construction of two fortresses in the North Caucasus. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mühimme defteri 43, nos. 193, 206, 247, 480.

1. MD 43, no. 193, 14 Cemāziü'l-evvel 988/27 June 1580

facsimile:

۱۹۲
 فانه هوندرنه نامه به هاپوفا
 صدر به بهر امیر کرم
 و در قیوم کما فطنته لصفه وزیر عثمان پاشا اودم تاج اعلیٰ مکتوب کوندر دین کوفون و مور قیوم واری
 بود روز نر و رفیع لصفه ندر قیوم و نهر که روز نر در قیوم نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا
 و دیگر بکنه عرض لکنه فکر اودنه محله بر کوندر رقیب نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا
 سراخور افراجه لیدوب و معاندن بجهت اودم کوندر رقیب و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا
 و کتایب قدر یراق قوتی لکنه کتایب و ما ضایع و ما ضایع و ما ضایع و ما ضایع و ما ضایع
 نامه به هاپوفا سعادتمند و در حوت قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم
 و فور اعلیٰ و خط اقصا کما مقتضایه فکر اودنه قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم و قیوم
 اودم لکنه در روز نر فایده و اطمینان لیدوب و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا و نهر نیا
 واقع اصفه

text:

Müşarileyh Behrām Bege virüldü.

[1] Hân hazretlerine nâme-i hümayun ki [2] Demür kapu muhâfazasında olan vezîrim ‘Osmân Paşa adamallahu te‘âla iclâlihu mektûb gönderüb Kefeden Demürkapuya varınca [3] yol üzerinde vâki‘ olan nehr-i Kubân ve nehr-i Terek üzerine birer kıla‘ binâ olunub sancâk tārîkiyle Behrām dâme ‘izzihuya [4] verülmek ricâsına ‘arz itmegin zıkr olunan mahâller iki [yüz] bin akçe ile sancâk virülüb ve kıla‘lar ta‘mir olunmak için kifâyet miqdârı [5] serâhor ihrâc idüb ve mu‘âvenet için adamlar gönderüb ve itmâma irişdükte beş-yüz nefer hisâr eri yazulub [6] ve kifâyet miqdâr yarâk konulmak için Kefe beyine ve kazısına ve nâzırına hükm-ü şerîf irsâl olunmuşdur imdî gerekdir ki [7]

text:

[1] Hân hazretlerine nâme-i hümâyûn ki [2] hâlâ Kefeden Demür kapuya varacak yolun üzerinde vâkı‘ olan nehr-i Kubân ve nehr-i Terek üzerlerinde [3] kendü mâlîyle bir kıla‘ yapmak için müte‘ahhid olan kıdvetü'l-ümerâü'l-kerâm Behrâm dâme ‘izzuhuya ol yerler [4] iki yüz biñ akçe ile sancâk virülüb öyle olsa zıkr olunan kıla‘ların binâsına ümerâ-i Çerâkiseden TB [5] hâlâ kıla‘ların binâsına vilâyet-i Çerâkise re‘âyâsından her vechle mu‘âvenet lâzım olmağın gerekdir ki vusûl buldukta [6] kadîmden dudmân-ı saltanat-ı fâhiremüz tarafına olan şadaqat ve ihlâsunuz muktezasınca zıkr olunan [7] Çerâkise beglerine ilâm ve haber gönderüb zıkr olunan mahâllerde müşarileyh kendü mâlîyle binâ idecek [8] kıla‘ların gereği gibi istihkâm üzere binâ olunmasında eger Çerâkise vilâyetinden kifâyet miqdâri adam ihrâc [9] itmekdür ve eger ğazir mümkün olduğuna göre mîr-i müşarileyhe mu‘âvanet ve matahirle itmekde Çerâkise [10] beylerine terğib idüb muşalahat itdürülmesü bâbında olagelen mesâ‘-i cemîlenüz zâi‘ olunmaya.

translation:

Imperial letter to the [Crimean] Khan

Until now lands on the Kuban and Terek rivers were granted as *sancak* with two hundred thousand *akçe* to the most noble of the noblest commanders Behram— may his glory endure— for him to built a fortress [one on each river] with his own money/belongings. As this being the case, request (?) of the Circassian chiefs for aforementioned fortresses and all kinds of help from the people of the Circassian province for the aforementioned fortresses are necessary. As such, I have commanded in accordance with your loyalty and sincerity to our glorious imperial dynasty since ancient times that you are to send news to the aforementioned Circassian chiefs, and for the proper construction of the fortresses that the aforementioned [Behram] will build with his own money in the said lands, by evaluating whether it is necessary to recruit adequate number of men from the Circassian province or whether it is abundant, you should bring forth pleasing effort to assist the noble aforementioned and to encourage the Circassian chiefs to agree on this.

3. MD 43, no. 247, 7 C[emâziü'l-aḥîr] 988/20 July 1580

facsimile:

Handwritten Ottoman Turkish text in a cursive script. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words written in larger, more decorative script. The document is dated 988/20 July 1580.

text:

[1] Kefe nāzırına hüküm ki şābikan Kefeden Şirvāna varunca yolları ma'mūr itmek üzere ba'zı qala'lar ta'mir olunub iki yüz biñ [2] akçe-i harīr ile sancāk 'ināyet olunan Behrām gelüb zıkr olunan sancāk ol maḥāllerde ihyā olunacak [3] tuzla ve sāir şu olunan mähī maḥallesini maḥşulunden tevzi' olunub qala'lar binā olunub eṭrafı şenliḥ[k] üç aylık [4] vazıfesi Kefe iskelesinden virülmek bābında 'ināyet ricā itmegün buyurdum ki müşarileyh varub vech-i meşrūḥ [5] üzere zıkr olunan qala'ların ta'mirine mübāşeret itdükte elinde olan berāt-ı 'alişānım mucebince vazıfesin Kefe iskelesinden [6] verüb ma'dā berātında mastūr olduḡu üzere ta'ayyur olunan maḥşullerinden alunub maşraf [7] ola.

translation:

Order to the nazır of Kefe

Behram who was granted a *sancak* with an a salary of two thousand *akçe* with the condition that some fortresses would be repaired in order to make the roads between Kefe and Shirvan prosperous, came forth to petition our benevolence that until are built and prosper with their shares of saltworks and yields of other water lands, his salary for three months be given from the [revenue] of the port of Kefe. I have commanded in accordance with my exalted diploma [*berāt*] that he holds, his salary be given from the [revenue] of the port of Kefe and then be registered as expense to be received from the allocated produces.

4. MD 43, no. 480, 27 Şa'bān 988/7 October 1580

facsimile:

text:

[1] Kefe begine hüküm ki muḳaddemān Çerkes Behrām dāme mecduhuya Çerkes içinde Şirvān yolu üzerinde ḥisār yapmak [2] şartıyla sancāk 'ināyet olmuşidi şabikān cenāb-ı imāret-me'ab Mehmed Giray Hān dāme me'āliyehu

südde-i sa‘âdetime [3] mektûb gönderüb mezbûrun sancāka liyāḳati ve istikāḳı olmaduĝun bildirüb [4] sancāk müyesser olmayub ḥizmet-i mezbûreden ref‘ olunmuşdur buyurdum ki [5] vusûl buldukta mezkûra ḥaber gönderüb bildirësün ki hizmet-i mezbûreden ferāĝat iyleye.

translation:

Order to the Bey of Kefe

Previously Çerkes Behram—may his fortune endure—was granted a *sancak* with the condition of building a fortress in the Circassian [country] on the route to Shirvan. Previously his honorable Excellency of proper governing Mehmed Girey Khan, may his court endure, sent a letter to my threshold of felicity informing that the aforementioned [Behram] was not worthy of [being granted] a *sancak*. As being granted a *sancak* is not [his] lot, he has been released from this service. I have commanded that when it arrives, you are to send the news and inform [him] so that he [Behram] will abandon the aforementioned service.

text:

[1] Cenāb-ı imāret-me‘ab eyālet-niṣāb devlet iktisāb el-muhtaṣṣ-ı bī-meẓīd ‘ināyetü'l-melikü'l-müte‘al Tağıstān Hākimi Şamhāl dāme me‘āliyhuya hükm ki [2] hālā Şīrvān eyāletine mutaṣarrıf olan destūr-u mükerrrem müşir-i mufahham niẓāmü'l-‘ālem vezirim Ca‘fer Paşa adāmu illahi te‘āla iclālehu [3] dergāh-ı ‘izzet destgāhımıza mektüb gönderüb rūs-u menhūs keferesi yigirmi biñ miqdārı tūfeng-endāz melā‘in-i ḥāsirīn ile [4] senüñ ūlkene gelüb iki yerde qala‘ yapub içlerine beş altı biñden ziyāde tūfeng-endāz kāfir komağla [5] senin içün ūlkesinde ikāmete kadir olmayub şa‘b sengistān yerlere çıkub aḥvālī mukadder olmuştur deyü [6] ‘arz ve ‘ilām eyledü imdī sen ve baban abā-i kirām ve'l-ecdād-i ‘azām enāruillahi berahinihum zamān-ı şerīflerinden ḥusūsan eyālet-i Şīrvān fethünden berü [7] südde-i seniyye-i sıpıhrasta[n] ve ‘atabe-i ‘aliyye-i felek-fersamıza ‘arz-ı şadaqat ve iḥlāsdan ḥālī olmaduğunuz ecilden [8] mutaṣarrıf olduğunuz eyāletin memālik-i mahrūsam muzaḥfat-ı masubesinde olub ḥıfz u ḥırāseti her vechle zimmet-i mütme‘il-i ‘aliyye-i mülūkānum lāzım-i vech olmağın [9] melā‘in-i ḥāsirīnin ūlkenüzde binā iyledükleri qala‘ları ‘ināyet-i ḥakla beraber hadm olunmak bābında fermān-ı ‘alişānım şadır olub [10] bu bābda müşarileyh Ca‘fer Paşaya lāzım olduğı kadar ‘asakir ve ol qala‘leri yıkmak içün [11] ‘arabalarıyla topçular irsāl olunmuştur ve sen yüce āsitānemize dāi‘ma ḥulus-u mu‘ād ile itā‘at ve isnād üzere [12] olduğun ecilden ḥaqqında meẓīd-i ‘avātıf-ı ‘aliyye şahāne ve mersa-i ‘avārif-i seniyye-i pādīşāhānem zuhūra getirüb [13] ḥıla‘-ı fāhiremden bir sevb ḥil‘at-ı mürisü‘l-beḥçet ve isyaf-ı fāhimü‘l-eknāfımdan bir kabẓa şimşir tıgımız tāsīr-i ‘ināyet [14] idüb buyurdum ki vusūl bulduğda ‘ināyet olunan [15] ḥil‘at-ı fāhire ve kısmet bāhiremizi envā‘-i ta‘zīm ve'l-ikrām ile giyüb ve tıg-ı ḥun-ı işāmımızı dāḥi izāzū‘l-ikrām (?) ve ihtirām ile [16] kuşanub dāḥi mūmaileyh vezirim Ca‘fer Paşa adāmallahi te‘āla iclalihu ile yekdil ve yekciḥet olub [17] ve sen dāḥi Tağıstān ‘askeriyle mūmaileyh vezirim vech-i münāsib gördüğü üzere ḥüsn-ü ittifaḥ ve ictihād ile melā‘in-i haksarīn üzerlerine [18] yürüyüb bi-izni‘l-lahü‘l-melikü‘t-teālī yapdukları qala‘ları ḥakla beraber hadm idüb ve rūs-u menhūsı [19] ‘ulf-u yerr ve ta‘me-i şemşir iyleyüb envā‘i yüzaklıkları taḥşiline mesa‘-i cemīl iyleyesüz ve ‘asākiri menşūreme [20] zaḥire tedārik itdürüb bir nesneye müzayeke çıkardurmayub gānimet ve sāliple gerü Şīrvāna ‘avdet ve mürāca‘at itdürmege ḥüsn-ü ihtimām iyleyesün.

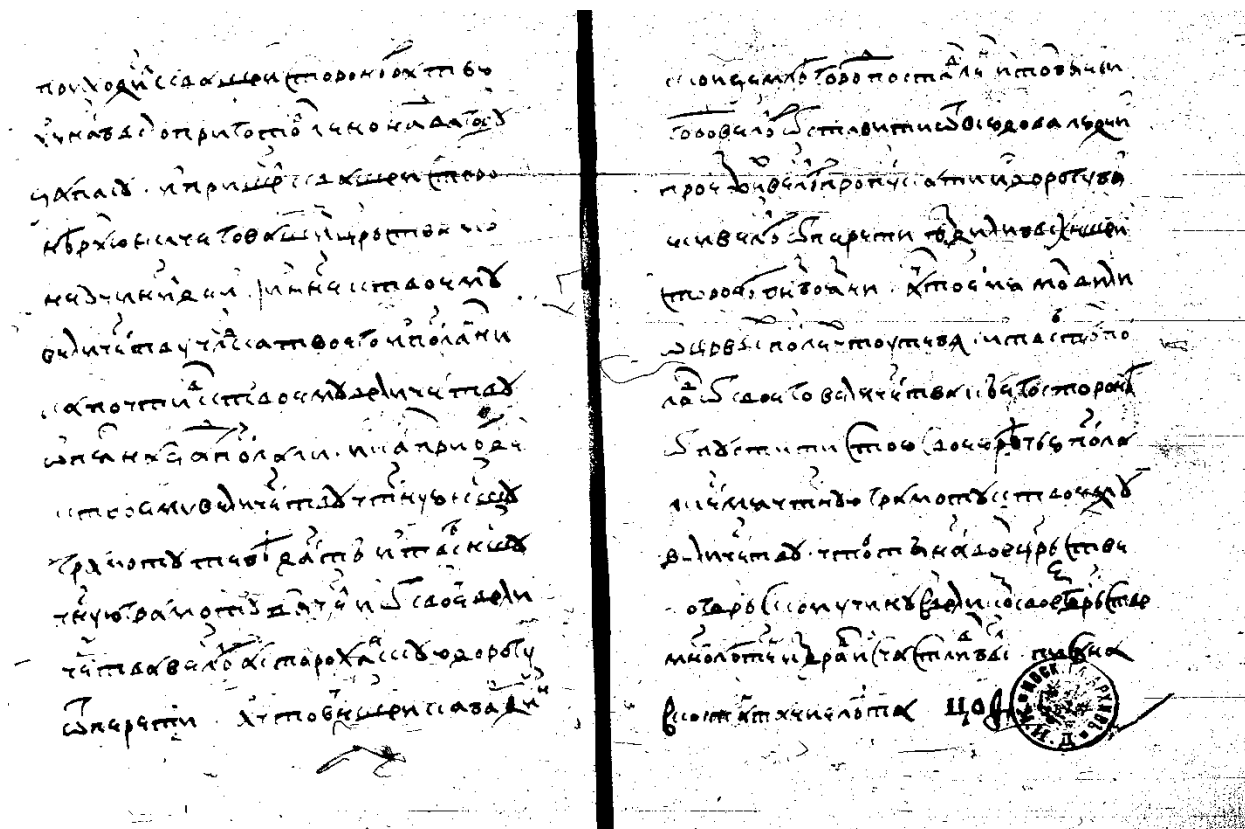
translation:

Order to his honorable Excellency, proper governing ruler of his state, Shamkhal, the ruler of Daghestan, who is chosen for prosperity and auspiciousness by the blessing of the highest God, may his court endure. My most noble vizier and illustrious marshal order of the world Cafer Pasha—may God endure his magnificence—sent a letter to our exalted palace and informed that the ill-fated Rus [Muscovites] infidels came to your country with twenty thousand musket-bearing cursed mischievous

soldiers and built fortresses in two places and stationed more than five-six thousand musket-bearing infidels inside these fortresses and that you are not capable of protecting your country and retreated to the arduous mountains as your destiny dictated. Now, because you and your father have never forsaken your loyalty and pure devotion to our very high threshold, exalted as the spheres, since the honorable times of our illustrious fathers and noble ancestors—may God illuminate their manifestations—and specifically since the conquest of the province of Shirvan and because your country is a part of our well-protected domains, defense and protection of the country you possess is by all means a duty of my powerful and lofty sovereignty. As such, my exalted order was sent to demolish—with God’s help—the fortresses built in your country by the cursed enemies. For this reason, adequate number of soldiers and gunners with their cars in order to destroy those fortresses were dispatched to the aforementioned Cafer Pasha. And your constant devotion, loyalty and leaning toward our exalted Porte brought about many magnificent gifts and harboring of my majestic favors. I convey my favor [to you] by the present of a splendid robe of honor from among my glorious robes to cause delight and with a sword from among the sides of conquerors. I have commanded when they arrive, you are wear the splendid robe of honor with every sign of respect and esteem, and gird our bloodthirsty sword with respect and veneration and to have one voice and direction with my aforementioned vizier Cafer Pasha—may God endure his magnificence. And you should attack the cursed enemies with Daghestani soldiers as my aforementioned vizier requires and in unity and by having the same opinion and with God’s help and permission, demolish the fortresses that they built. And by razing the ill-fated Rus [Muscovites] to the ground and putting them to sword, you should make glorious effort to bring forth all kinds of honorable acts and provide my victorious soldiers with grains and not allow any hardship on their part and pay careful attention to ensure their return with booty and in security back to Shirvan.

commentary:

In order to strengthen the allegiance of Georgian King Alexander II and create a Muscovite sphere of influence over Daghestan, Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich (r. 1584-1598) ordered Knyaz Khvorostinin to attack the lands of the shamkhal. Knyaz Khvorostinin easily captured Tarku in July 1593. The shamkhal himself was wounded in the battle. After the capture of Tarku by the Muscovites, the shamkhal and his men took refuge in the mountainous areas around Tarku and appealed to the Porte for help. This letter is the Ottoman sultan’s response. As the sultan promised in the letter, the Ottomans sent cannons and soldiers to assist the shamkhal. The Daghestani forces supported by the Ottomans defeated the Muscovite army and managed to expel them from Daghestan.



text:

[fol. 56a] A se gramota ko tsariu i velikomu kniaziiu tur//[fol. 56b]skogo Selim Saltana s Yvanom Novosil'tsovm.

Pered strokami napisano porozn':

Edin bog i velichestvo ego.

Saltan Selim Suleimanov syn.

Vsiem kniazem nachalo i velichestvo i velichan'e, i vsiem krest'ianskim stranam gosudar' i vsiem tiem tsar'stvom, kotorye vo krest'ianstve, gosudar', Moskovskogo tsar'stva kniaziiu Ivanu // [fol. 57a] Vasil'evu synu velichestvu i velichan'iu ego izviestno, to i nyne k nam velichestvo tvoe i miloserdie, sluzhebnik tvoi, Ivanom zovut, chestnyi vash posol s chestnoiu vasheiu gramotoiu k nam i k nashemu velichestvu i gosudar'stvu vashego velichestva chestnye tvoi riechi nashemu velichestvu izveshchal. Posylal esi ot svoego velichestva rat' svoiu [k] Astorokhan'skim tsarem, i ot tvoego velichestva i schast'em bog tvoemu velichestvu Astorokhan' poruchil, a chto nad nimi uchinilosia, i nashemu velichestvu i gosudar'stvu izve//[fol. 57b]shchal. A prezh togo nashego velichestva iskoni viechno Astorokhan' nasha byla, i nashego velichestva odna viera, i dlia svoego velichestva i gosudar'stva k Astorokhani rat' svoiu poslali byli: Saltan Maamet khana,

Kafinskogo namiesnika, i krymskikh zemel' tsarei i inykh liudei, i svoego velichestva sanchaka. I nashemu velichestvu po bozhei vole tak sstalos'. I nashego velichestva kniazi nashi kholopi Kabardynskie zemli iskoni viechnye nashi byvali, a nyne v Kabardynskoi zemlie gorod postavljen, // [fol. 58a] i kotorye iz Astorokhanskije zemli, kipchazhskie i inye zemli musul'many k nam priezzhali v nashi strany, a nyne na toi doroge stoiat tvoego velichestva liudi, i notomu k nashemu velichestvu k stranam nashim ne iezdiat, chto tam postavljen gorod. I dlia togo ot nashego velichestva krymskoi tsar' Devlet Kiriei i inye mnogie kniazi, kholopi nashi, ne so mnogoiu rat'iu khodili. A chto u tebia posol ego, chetyre gody i piat' liet u sebia v rukakh derzhish, a ne otpustish. I on bez nashego otpusku // [fol. 58b] prikhodil k vashei storonie rat'iu, a u nas bylo prigotovleno na dva godu zapasu. I prishel k vashei storonie rat'iu, nichego vashim tsar'stvam ne uchinil, dei. I nyne k tvoemu velichestvu cheloveka tvoego i poslannika pochtiv k tvoemu velichestvu opiat' nazad poslali. I kak priidet k tvoemu velichestvu, chestnuii nashu gramotu tebie dast, i ty b nashu chestnuii gramotu vychel i ot svoego velichestva veliel Astorokhanskuii dorogu otpereti. A chto v nashei Kabardin//[fol. 59a]skoi zemlie gorod postavljen, i tot by esi gorod veliel otstaviti, otvsiudova liudei proezzikh veliel propuskati i dorogu by esi veliel otpereti, iezdili by k nashei storonie bez boiazni. A chto esmia molvili o tsarevykh poslekh, chto u tebia, i ty b tiekh poslov ot svoego velichestva k ego storonie otpustiti [veliel]. S toiu svoeiu riech'iu poslali esmia chestnuii gramotu k tvoemu velichestvu, chtob ty na svoem tsar'stve [p]o gosudar'skomu chinu v velikom svoem gosudar'stve mnogolieten i zdrav i schastliv byl. Pisana v Kostantanie lieta 979-go.

translation:

And this is the letter of the Turkish Sultan Selim [sent] with Ivan Novosiltsov to the Tsar and Grand Prince.

Above the text is written:

God is one, his majesty.

Sultan Selim, son of Süleyman.

It is known to the head and majesty and glory of all princes, the ruler of all Christian countries, the sovereign of all those tsardoms that belong to Christianity, his majesty and glory Prince Ivan, son of Vasilii, of the Muscovite Tsardom, that presently [from] your majesty and grace there [has come] to us your servitor by the name of Ivan, your honourable envoy, with your sincere letter to us, our majesty and crown, [and] communicated the sincere words of your

majesty to our majesty. From your majesty's side, you sent your army to the khans (*sic*) of Astrakhan, and owing to your majesty and good fortune, God entrusted Astrakhan to your majesty, and what happened to them [that is, the people of Astrakhan], [you] informed our majesty and crown. But prior to that, from time immemorial Astrakhan had been our majesty's, of the same faith with our majesty, and for the sake of our majesty and crown we sent to Astrakhan our army: Sultan Mehmed Khan¹; governor of Kefe; khans (*sic*) and other men of the Crimean lands; and a sancak [bey] of our majesty's. And through God's will, so it happened to our majesty. From time immemorial, the princes of the Kabardinian land have been our majesty's slaves, but now a fortress has been built in the Kabardinian land. And as to those Muslims from the Astrakhan lands [and] Kipchak and other lands, that used to come to us, to our countries, now on the route [they used to take] are stationed your majesty's people, and because of the town built there they [Muslims] do not come to our majesty, to our countries. And for this reason, from our majesty's side, Crimean Khan Devlet Girey and other princes, our slaves, campaigned with not many troops. As to his (the khan's) envoy, you have detained him for four or five years and refused to grant him leave. And it was without our permission that he (the khan) came to your country with an army, whereas we had two years' worth of supplies prepared. And he said that he came to your country with army, he did not cause your tsardoms any harm. And now we have sent your majesty's envoy, having honoured him, back to your majesty. And as he comes to your majesty and delivers to you our sincere letter, would you read our sincere letter and order from your majesty's side that the Astrakhan route be opened. As to the fact that a fortress has been erected in our Kabardinian land, would you order that fortress be demolished, travelers from everywhere be allowed to pass, the route be opened, so that they would come to our country without fear. As to what we have said about the khan's envoys that are with you, would you grant leave to those envoys from your majesty to his country. With these words of ours we have sent a sincere letter to your majesty [wishing] that you may remain on your royal throne as a sovereign in your great dominion for many years in health and happiness.

Written in Constantinople in the year 979/1571.²

¹ In the Muscovite version Mehmed II the Conqueror (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) is mentioned as if he participated in the Astrakhan campaign. However, the Ottoman version clearly states that Mehmed II conquered Kefe and as a result of this conquest, the Crimean and Circassian lands were taken under Ottoman control.

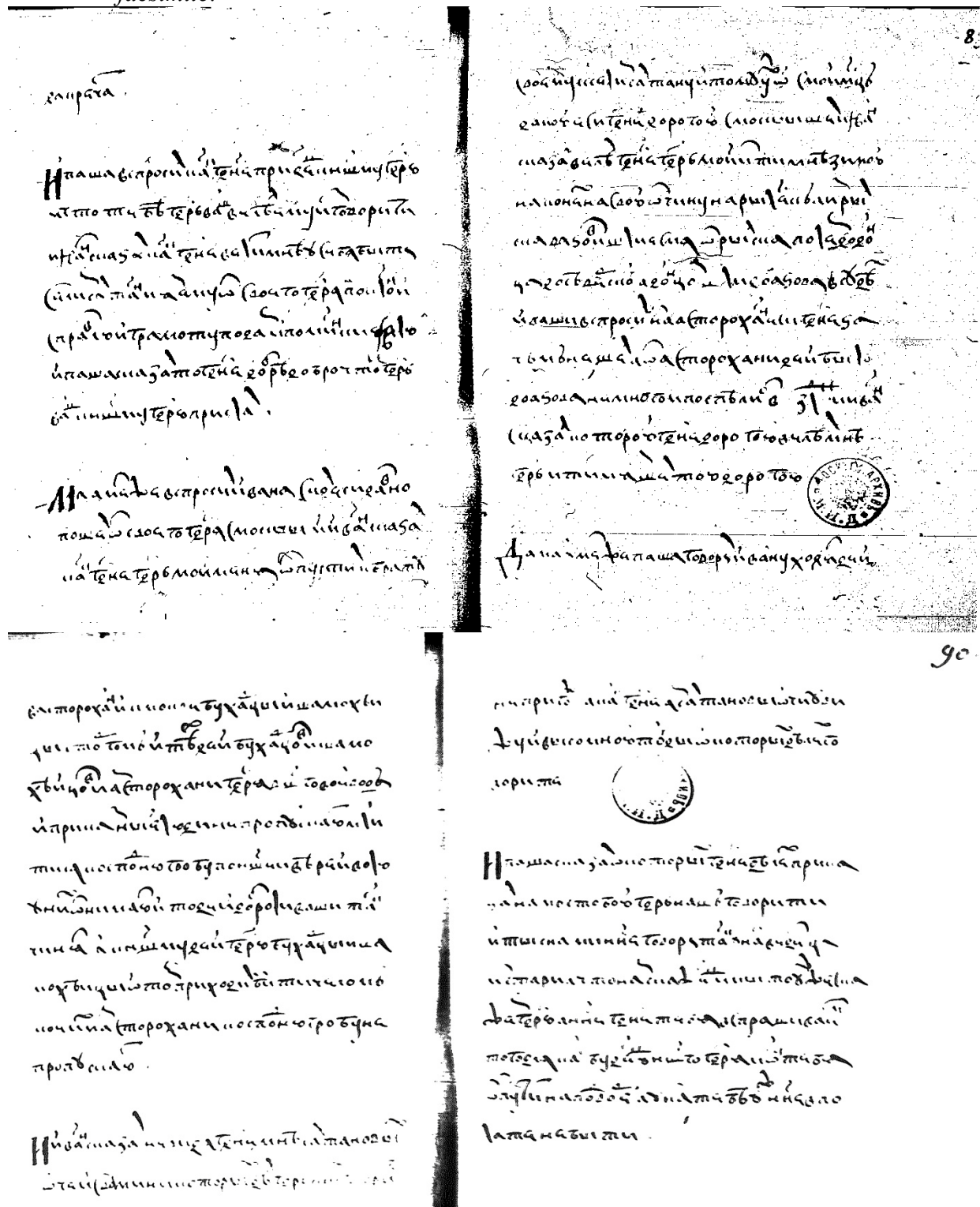
² The Muscovite version of the letter is dated 979 AH, i.e. 1571 AD. However, we know that Ivan Novosiltsev carried out his mission between January 1570 and September 1570. According to his *stateinye spiski*, he received the letter of Selim II on July 30, 1570. See *Puteshestviia russkikh poslov XVI-XVII vv.: Stateinye spiski* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1954), 94.

comments:

This document is the Muscovite translation of the Ottoman sultan's letter sent to Ivan IV in July 1570 (see Appendix I-A for its Ottoman version). Comparison of the Muscovite translation with the Ottoman version gives us clues about how the Posol'skii Prikaz handled translations of letters sent by foreign rulers. There are several significant points that need to be stressed. First, for the sake of simplifying convoluted sentences, the translator omitted several large chunks of the Ottoman version of the letter. Second, he also adjusted the Ottoman version in line with the Muscovite diplomatic traditions and parlance. To illustrate, the Ottoman text conveys the notion that Muscovite tsar was not equal with the Ottoman sultan and in the Ottoman version, the tsar was openly invited to submit himself to the Porte as a vassal of the sultan. In the Muscovite version, however, these parts are simply not translated. Moreover, while the Ottoman version of the letter specifically counts the lands of the Circassians as one of the regions subjugated and turned into a province following the Ottoman conquest of Kefe in 1475, the Muscovite translation does not name the Circassians and use the phrase "and lands of other peoples." Third, one can notice several translation mistakes in the Muscovite text. For example, the Ottoman text indicates that although the Crimean khan wished to raid Muscovite lands, a permission for such a raid was not granted by the Porte and he never went to Muscovite lands. The Ottoman sentence reads, "And [the khan's request for permission to raid] has been refused and stopped many times, only because your devotion and amity to us is well-known" (see Appendix I-A). However, this part was translated, "And it was without our permission that he [Crimean khan] came to your country with army."

B. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha's discussion with Muscovite envoy Ivan Novosiltsev regarding the route that the envoy took in order to go to Istanbul from Moscow and the status of and situation in Astrakhan, 1570. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, *Turetskie dela*, kniga 2, fol. 88b-89b.

facsimile:



text:

[fol. 88b] Maamet zhe vsprosil Ivana: skol' esi davno poshel ot svoego gosudaria s Moskvu? I Ivan skazal: kak, gospodine, gosudar' moi menia otpustil k bratu // [fol. 89a] svoemu k Selim saltanu, i tomu uzhe osmoi mesiats. Da koiu esi, gospodine, dorogoiu s Moskvu shel? I Ivan skazal: veliel, gospodine, gosudar' moi itti mnie zimoiu na konekh na svoiu otchinu na Rylesk, a iz Ryl'ska v Azov, i shli esmia ot Ryl'ska polem do Dontsa do Sieverskogo, a Dontsom shli do Azova v sudiekh. I pashi vsprosili: na Astorokhan' esi, gospodine, zachiem ne shel? A ot Astorokhani, dei, bylo do Azova nemnogo i pospieli b v 17 dnei. I Ivan skazal: kotoroiu, gospodine, dorogoiu veliel mnie gosudar' iti, i iaz shel toiu dorogoiu.

Da Maamet zhe pasha govoril Ivanu: khodiat, dei, [fol. 89b] v Astorokhan' i k Moskvu bukhartsy i shamokhieitsy s torgom, i tiekh, dei, bukhartsov i shamokhieitsov iz Astorokhani gosudaria vashego voevody i prikaznye liudi ne propuskaiut molitisia k Ospodniu grobu po nashei viere i voliu u nikh otnimaiut, i to, dei, dobro li vashi tak chiniat? A k nashemu, dei, gosudariu bukhartsy i shamokhieitsy o tom prikhodili biti chelom, koe ikh iz Astorokhani k Ospodniu grobu ne propuskaiut.

translation:

[Sokullu] Mehmed [Pasha] also asked Ivan [Novosiltsev], "How long ago have you departed from your sovereign from Moscow?" And Ivan said, "It is now the eighth month, sir, since my sovereign has sent me to his brother Sultan Selim." "And by which road, sir, did you travel from Moscow?" And Ivan said, "My sovereign ordered me, sir, to travel in winter by horses to his patrimony, to Ryl'sk, and from Ryl'sk to Azov, and so we went from Ryl'sk by steppe to the Severskii Donets [River], and by the Donets we traveled by boats to Azov." And the pashas asked, "Why did not you, sir, go through Astrakhan? For [the distance] from Astrakhan to Azov is not large and you could have made it in 17 days." And Ivan said, "Whichever road, sir, my sovereign ordered me to take, I took that road."

And Mehmed Pasha then told Ivan, "People of Bukhara and Şemahı (*sic*, perhaps Samarkand is meant) go to Astrakhan and to Moscow to trade, and your sovereign's voevodas and prikaz officials do not allow those people of Bukhara and Şemahı to go from Astrakhan to pray at the Lord's Tomb (Mecca), in accordance with our faith, and detain them—is it right for your people to do that? And the people of Bukhara and Şemahı came to our sovereign to complain that they were not allowed to go from Astrakhan to the Lord's Tomb."

commentary:

The main objective of the embassy of Ivan Novosiltsev was to understand the real intentions of the Ottomans and to negotiate the ways to keep the Ottomans out of the Muscovite steppe frontier zone in which the Muscovites were prepared to compete with the Crimean Khanate but avoided a confrontation with the Ottomans in their early stages of creating a sphere of influence. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha questioned Ivan Novosiltsov regarding the Muscovite fortress in Kabarda, Muscovy's relations with the Crimean Khanate, and Muscovite blockage of the pilgrimage route from Central Asia. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha also tried to find out what the main objectives of the Muscovite involvement in the North Caucasus were. In this regard, he inquired about the route the Muscovite envoy took to come to the Porte. Mehmed Pasha asked Novosiltsov why the envoy did not prefer to take the route from Astrakhan through the Northern Caucasus to Azak. By doing so, the pasha tried to ascertain whether the Muscovites had settled in Astrakhan and were regularly using the North Caucasus route.¹ The Muscovite envoy was also questioned in detail about the Muscovite fortress built in 1567. The overall tone of the discussions of the Muscovite envoy, Novosiltsov, and his dialogue with the pasha and the sultan show that the Ottomans considered Muscovy a second-rate power, similar to a vassal state.

¹ Also see N. A. Smirnov, *Rossia i Turtsiia v XVI-XVII vv*, Uchenye zapiski, vyp. 94 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Gosudarsvennogo Universiteta, 1946), 121.

C. Shert' signed in 1588 by Kabardinian Mamstriuk Kniaz, Kudenek Mirza, and others. From *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskogo Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Diel, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 47-48; *Kabardino-russkie otnosheniia v 16-18 vv.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1957), 50-51

Запис шертная как приведены черкасы Мамстриукъ князь да Худенекъ мурза Канбулатов сын Черкасской и черкасы Елбуздукъ с товарищи.

Даю шерт по своей вере, по мусульманскому закону, г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. и его дѣтем, которыхъ ему Богъ дастъ вперед, на том, что приезжали есмь бити челомъ г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. ото князя Канбулата князя и ото всѣхъ Кабардинскихъ черкас, чтобъ государь насъ пожаловал, взялъ подъ свою царскую руку потому жъ, какъ ихъ держалъ в своемъ жалованье отецъ государя нашего г. ц. и в. к. Ив. Вас. в. Р. И насъ Канбулата князя и меня Мамстриука князя и Куденека мурзу и всѣхъ братью нашу и племянниковъ г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. пожаловал, взялъ насъ подъ свою царскую руку и во оборону ото всякихъ нашихъ недругов; и намъ Канбулату князю и братье нашей Думануку князю и всей братье нашей и дѣтемъ нашимъ и племянникомъ и всѣмъ нашимъ лутчимъ людямъ со всею Кабардою Черкасскою г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. служити и отъ г. ц. и в. к. быти намъ всѣмъ неотступнымъ и до своего живота и хъ Турскому и хъ Крымскому и хъ Шевкалскому и хъ инымъ государевымъ недругомъ ни хъ кому не приставаѣ. А кто будетъ г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. другъ, тотъ и намъ будетъ другъ; а кто будетъ г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. недругъ, тотъ и намъ будетъ недругъ и на того намъ со государевыми воеводами с Астараханскими и с Терскими воеводами с ратными людьми ходити и приводити во государеву волю. И жити Канбулату князю и инѣ Мамстриуку князю и Очигану князю и Куденеку мурзѣ и братье моеѣ Дамануку да Избулдуку князю да Анзаруку да Сингалѣю князю Канглычевымъ да князю Бѣтемирку и всей братье нашей племянникомъ и дѣтемъ и лутчимъ нашимъ людямъ, перемениаясь, жити в государеве в Терскомъ городе со государевыми воеводами и государю служити и стояти намъ всею землею Черкасскою с Терскими воеводами на государева недруга на всякого заодно. А кто будетъ г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. его государскимъ воеводамъ Астараханскимъ и

Терскимъ воеводамъ непослушенъ будетъ и хъ Терскому городу не приставетъ и в государеве жалованье с нами быти не похочетъ, Шевкалской князь или Тюменской князь или горские князи или Кумыки или Иверские князи или изъ нашего роду которой Черкасской князь отъ государева жалованья отстатѣ похочетъ, также которые Черкасские князи с своими улусы Толостановъ род Шолохъ князь Ташбаруковъ з братьею и с племянники и з детми да Кантуковъ род Папшнуку князь да Ослонбекъ да Жансохъ служатъ Крымскому и Шевкалскому,—и намъ с Канбулатомъ княземъ и з братьею своею и со всею Черкасскою землею на тѣхъ на всѣхъ на государевыхъ непослушниковъ вмѣстѣ з государевыми воеводами ходити ратью и во государеву волю ихъ во государеве вотчинѣ хъ Астарахани и хъ Терскому городу в государеву волю ихъ приводити и заклады у нихъ поимати и стояти намъ всѣмъ Черкасскимъ княземъ и мурзамъ з государевыми воеводами заодно на всякого недруга и на нихъ ходити ратью и государю прямити о всемъ потому, какъ в сей шертной записи написано. Также которые недруги Терского ратъ и Крымской или иные которые недруги поидутъ во государеве вотчинѣ хъ Астарахани или хъ Терскому городу,—и намъ, будучи в Терскомъ городе, со государевыми воеводами за городъ стояти и битись с ними до смерти и государевыхъ воеводъ не выдати и хитрости и оману надъ государевыми воеводами и надъ ратными людьми и надъ городомъ хитрости некоторые не учинити. Также коли г. ц. и в. к. Θ. И. в. Р. велитъ намъ итти на которого своего недруга на Литовского или в Нѣмцы,—и намъ и нашимъ братьямъ и дѣтемъ итти на государеву службу, во всемъ коли государь велитъ итти на свою государеву службу. И о всемъ намъ со всею Черкасскою землею государю служити и прямити и хъ недругомъ государевымъ ни хъ кому не приставаѣ,—о всемъ потому, какъ в сей шертной записи писано.

Июля въ 25 день по сей записи приведены шертѣ Мамстриукъ князь да Куденекъ мурза да черкасы лутчіе ихъ люди Елбуздукъ с товарищи.

text:

Zapis' shertnaia, kak privedeny cherkasy Mamstriuk kniaz', da Khudenek murza Kanbulatov syn Cherkaskoi i cherkasy Elbuzduk s tovaryshchi.

Daiu shert' po svoei viere, po musul'manskomu zakony, gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziu Feodoru Ivanovichu vsea Rusii i ego dietem, kotorykh emu bog dast vpered, na tom, chto priezzhali esmia biti chelom gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziu Feodoru Ivanovichu vsea Rusii oto kniazia Kanbulata kniazia i oto vsiekh kabardinskikh cherkas, chtob gosudar' nas pozhaloval, vzial pod svoiu tsarskuiu ruku po tomu zh, kak ikh derzhal v svoem zhalovan'e otets gosudaria nashego, tsar' i velikii kniaz' Ivan Vasil'evich vsea Rusii. I nas, Kanbulata kniazia, i menia, Mamstriuka kniazia, i Kudeneka murzu, i vsiekh brat'iu nashu i plemiannikov tsar' i velikii kniaz' Feodor Ivanovich vsea Rusii pozhaloval, vzial nas pod svoiu tsarskuiu ruku i vo oboronu oto vsiakikh nashikh nedrugov. I nam, Kanbulatu kniaziu, i brat'e nashei Dumanuku kniaziu, i vsei brat'e nashei, i dietem nashim, i plemiannikom, i vsiem nashim lutchim liudem so vseiu Kabardoiu cherkasskoiu gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziu Feodoru Ivanovichu vsea Rusii sluzhiti, i ot gosudaria tsaria i velikogo kniazia byti nam vsiem neotstupnym i do svoego zhivota i kh Turskomu, i kh Krymskomu, i k Shevkal'skomu i k inym gosudarevym nedrugom ni kh komu ne pristavati. A khto budet gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziu Feodoru Ivanovichu vsea Rusii drug, tot i nam budet drug; a khto budet gosudariu tsariu i velikomu kniaziu Feodoru Ivanovichu vsea Rusii nedrug, tot i nam budet nedrug, i na togo nam so gosudarevymi voevodami s astarakhanskimi i s terskimi voevodami s ratnymi liud'mi khoditi i privoditi vo gosudarevu voliu. I zhiti Kanbulatu kniaziu, i mne, Mamstriuku kniaziu, i Ochikanu kniaziu, i Kudeneku murzie, i brat'e moei Damanuku, da Izbulduku kniaziu, da Anzaruku, da Singalieiu kniaziu Kanglychevym, da kniaziu Bitemriuku, i vsei brat'e nashei, plemiannikom, i detiem i lutchim nashim liudem, peremeniaias', zhiti v gosudareve v Terskom gorode so gosudarevymi voevodami, i gosudariu sluzhiti i stoiati nam vseiu zemleiu Cherkaskoiu s terskimi voevodami na gosudareva nedrug na vsiakogo zaodin. A khto budet gosudaria tsaria i velikogo kniazia Feodora Ivanovicha vsea Rusii ego gosudarskim voevodam astarakhanskim i terskim voevodam neposlushen budet, i k Terskomu gorodu ne pristanet, i v gosudareve zhalovan'e s nami byti ne pokhochet—shevkal'skoi kniaz', ili tiumenskoi kniaz', ili gorskie kniazi, ili kumyki, ili iverskie kniazi, ili iz nashego rodu kotoroi cherkaskoi kniaz' ot gosudareva zhalovan'ia otstati pokhochet, takzhe kotorye cherkaskie kniazi s svoimi ulusy, Toilostanov rod: Sholokh kniaz Tashbzarukov z brat'eiu, i s plemianniki, i z det'mi da Kaitukov rod: Papshnuk

kniaz', da Oslonbek, da Zhansokh, sluzhat Krymskomu i Shevkal'skomu—i nam s Kanbulatom kniazem, i z brat'eiu svoeiu, i so vseiu Cherkaskoiu zemleiu na tiekh na vsiekh na gosudarevykh neposlushnikov vmieste z gosudarevymi voevodami khoditi rat'iu, i ko¹ (*sic*) gosudarevu voliu ikh ko gosudareve votchine k Astorakhani i k Terskomu gorodu v gosudarevu voliu ikh privoditi, i zaklady u nikh poimati, i stoiati nam vsiem cherkaskim kniazem i murzam z gosudarevymi voevody zaodin na vsiakogo nedruga, i na nikh khoditi rat'iu i gosudariu priamiti o vsem po tomu, kak v sei shertnoi zapisi napisano. Takzhe kotorye nedrugi, Terskogo² (*sic*) rat' i Krymskoi ili inye kotorye nedrugi, poidut ko gosudareve votchine k Astarakhani ili k Terskomu gorodu—i nam, buduchi v Terskom gorode, so gosudarevymi voevodami za gorod stoiati, i bitis' s nimi do smerti, i gosudarevykh voevod ne vydati, i khitrosti i omanu nad gosudarevymi voevodami, i nad ratnymi liud'mi i nad gorodom khitrosti nikotorye ne uchiniti. Takzhe koli gosudar' tsar' i velikii kniaz' Feodor Ivanovich vsea Rusii velit nam itti na ktorogo svoego nedruga, na Litovskogo ili v Niemtsy, i nam, i nashim brat'iam, i dietem itti na gosudarevu sluzhbu, kol'kim koli gosudar' velit itti na svoiu gosudarevu sluzhbu. I o vsem nam so vseiu Cherkaskoiu zemleiu gosudariu sluzhiti i priamiti i k nedrugom gosudarevym ni kh komu ne pristavati—o vsem po tomu, kak v sei shertnoi zapisi pisano.

Iiulia v 25 den' no sei zapisi privedeny [k] sherti Mastriuk kniaz' da Kudenek murza da cherkasy lutchie ikh liudi Ilbuzduk s tovaryshchi.

translation:

Record of the pledge of allegiance (*shert'*) given by the Circassian Prince Mamstriuk; Kudenek Mirza, son of [Prince] Kanbulat Cherkaskoi; and Circassians Elbuzduk, and others.

In accordance with my faith, under Muslim law, I give the pledge of allegiance to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus' and to his children whom God may give him in the future. Thereupon, we have come from Prince Kanbulat and from all Kabardinian Circassians in order to petition humbly the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus' to be granted favour and be taken under his tsar's hand according to the same conditions as our sovereign's father, the Tsar and Grand Prince Ivan Vasil'evich of all Rus', granted them his favour. And the Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus' has [also] granted favour to us, Prince Kanbulat and myself, Prince Mamstriuk, and Kudenek

¹ It should read "vo gosudarevu voliu."

² It should read "Turskogo rat'."

Mirza, and all our brothers and nephews, [and] has taken us under his tsar's hand to be protected from our various enemies. And we, Prince Kanbulat and our brother Prince Dumanuk and all our brothers and children, and nephews, and all our better men with entire Circassian Kabarda, will serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus', and for the rest of our lives we all will never quit [serving] the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince, nor will we ally with the Turkish [sultan], the Crimean [khan], the shamkhal, or any other enemies of the sovereign. And whoever is a friend to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus', he will be our friend too; and whoever is an enemy to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus', he will be our enemy as well, and together with the sovereign's voevodas of Astrakhan and Terek [Town] and soldiers we will wage war against him and bring him into submission to the sovereign's will. And Prince Kanbulat and myself, Prince Mamstriuk, and Prince Ochikan and Kudenek Mirza and my brothers Prince Dumanuk and Prince Izbulduk and Anzaruk, and Prince Sunchaley, sons of Kanglych, and Prince Bitemriuk and all of our brothers and nephews and children, and better men will live by turns in the sovereign's Terek Town with the sovereign's voevodas and serve the sovereign, and, together with the entire Circassian land, stand against every enemy of the sovereign with the voevodas of Terek [Town] as one. And whoever disobeys the Astrakhan and Terek [Town] voevodas of the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus' and does not come to Terek Town, and refuses to be accept the sovereign's favour along with us—be they the shamkhal or the prince of Tiumen or mountain princes or Kumyks or Iberian princes, or any Circassian prince from our family, who would wish to forsake the sovereign's favour, also any Circassian princes with their *uluses*, [such as] the Toilastanov family: Prince Sholokh [Solokh], son of Tashbzaruk, with his brothers and nephews, and children; and the Kaitukov family: Prince Papshunuk and Oslonbek [Aslanbek], and Jansokh [Yansokh] [who] serve the Crimean [khan] and the shamkhal. And with Prince Kanbulat and our brothers, and with the entire Circassian land we will, together with the sovereign's voevodas, wage war against all those who disobey the sovereign and bring them into submission to the sovereign's will, to the sovereign's patrimony, to Astrakhan and Terek Town, and obtain hostages from them. And we, all the Circassian princes and mirzas, will stand as one with the sovereign's voevodas against every enemy and campaign against them, and act faithfully towards the sovereign in everything as recorded in this pledge of allegiance. Also, should any enemies, [be they] the army of the Turkish [sultan], or the Crimean khan, or any other enemies, attack the sovereign's patrimony of Astrakhan or Terek Town, and we, stationed in Terek Town, will

defend the fortress together with the sovereign's voevodas and fight them [the enemies] to the death and not surrender the sovereign's voevodas and not trick or deceive the sovereign's voevodas and soldiers, and not commit anything devious against the fortress. Also, should the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Feodor Ivanovich of all Rus' order us to campaign against some enemy of his—be that the Lithuanian [prince] or the Germans³—and when [this happens] we and our brothers and children will go to the sovereign's service, as many [of us] as the sovereign orders to go to his royal service. And in every way we, with the entire Circassian land, will serve the sovereign and be faithful [to him], and not ally with any of the sovereign's enemies, according to what is recorded in this pledge of allegiance.

On the 25th of July, Prince Mamstriuk and Kudanek Mirza and their better men Circassians Ilbuzduk, and others swore a pledge of allegiance in accordance with this record.

commentary:

In addition to the analysis of this document presented in Chapter 3, the *shert'* shows that Mamstriuk and Kudadek gave the pledge in accordance with their own religious rites. In this specific case, they swore loyalty to the Muscovite tsar according to the rituals of the Muslim law. Despite being a Muslim like his father Temriuk, Mamstriuk was a staunch Muscovite ally and remained so until he was killed by Kazy Mirza (Gazi Mirza in Ottoman sources), son of Psheapshoko of the Kaytuks, in the late 1590s.⁴

³ The Germans in this context refers not to ethnic Germans but to any West Europeans.

⁴ *Snosheniia Rossii s Kavkazom: Materialy izvlechennye iz Moskovskago Glavnago Arkhiva Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del, 1578-1613 gg.*, ed. S. L. Belokurov (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1889), 3; E. N. Kusheva, *Narody Severnogo Kavkaza i ikh Sviazi s Rossiei* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1963), 49-50, 285. As for Mamstriuk, it should be noted that his loyalty was known and appreciated in Muscovy to such an extent that he was not required to submit hostages to the Muscovites until 1589 when Kanbulat died and a civil war broke out in Kabarda. This is important because in spite of the fact that the Muscovites were very rigid about their prescribed methods of dealing with the local rulers of the southern steppes, they did not require any hostages from Mamstriuk.

CHRONOLOGY

1453- Constantinople taken by Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire. End of the Byzantine Empire.

1461- Trebizond falls to the Ottomans.

1472- Ivan III of Muscovy marries a Byzantine princess, Sofia Paleologue, a niece of the last emperor.

1475- Gedik Ahmed Pasha captures Caffa. The Crimean Khanate reduced to Ottoman vassalage.

1480- The standoff on the Ugra between the Great Horde and Muscovy.

1481- Mehmed II dies. Bayezid II enthroned.

1500- Ivan III defeats Lithuania at the battle of Vedrosha. Muscovy annexes Novgorod, Chernihiv, and Starodub.

1501- Safavid Dynasty takes over Iran and Azerbaijan.

1502- Mengli Girey razes Saray and puts an end to the Great Horde.

1505- Ivan III dies. Vasilii III enthroned.

1510- Muscovy annexes Pskov.

1512- Beyazid II dies. Selim I enthroned.

1514- Muscovy annexes Smolensk. Selim I defeats Shah İsmail I of the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran; East Anatolia under Ottoman control.

1515- Mengli Girey dies. Mehmed Girey I becomes khan in the Crimea.

1519- Ottomans construct forts in the Kuban region to control the Adyghe.

1520- The reign of Süleyman I begins.

1521- Muscovite annexation of Riazan. Sahib Girey becomes the Khan of Kazan.

1523- Filofei, a monk in Pskov, articulates idea of “Third Rome.”

1526- Battle of Mohacs. Süleyman I defeats Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia.

1532- Vasili III installs his candidate Canali as the Khan of Kazan. Sahib Girey becomes the Khan of the Crimean Khanate.

1533- Vasili III dies. Ivan IV enthroned.

1538- Sea Battle of Preveza. Ottoman gain control of the Mediterranean Sea.

1539- Sahib Girey raids the Janeyns in the Taman Peninsula.

1541- Süleyman I conquers Buda in Hungary.

1542- Sahib Girey organizes a campaign against the Janeyns.

1544- Sahib Girey attacks Kabarda.

1546- Lesser Nogays attack the Crimean Khanate and annihilated by the Crimeans.

1547- Ivan IV crowned as “Tsar.”

1549- Sahib Giray occupies Astrakhan. Sefa Girey of Kazan deposed.

1550- Ivan IV enacts a new code of law and reforms the army.

1551- Sahib Girey raids Kabarda. Deposed by the Ottomans.

1552- Muscovy annexes the Khanate of Kazan. Adyghes and Besleneys dispatch envoys to the tsar. Safavids establish diplomatic relations with Muscovy.

1555- Treaty of Amasya between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran.

1556- Ivan IV annexes the Khanate of Astrakhan. Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi pledges allegiance to Ivan IV. Zaporozhian Cossacks under Vyshnevetskyi and their Circassians allies begin raiding Ottoman/Crimean possessions in the north of the Black Sea.

1557- Kabardinian Chief Temrük sends envoys to the tsar.

1558- Ivan IV attacks the Livonian Order. The Livonian War begins. The Stroganovs hire Cossacks to subdue the Tatars of Siberia.

1563- Muscovy annexes the territory of the Livonian Order. Vyshnevetskyi is captured and killed by the Ottomans.

1565- Ivan IV initiates the *oprichnina*, reign of terror.

1566- Süleyman I dies. Selim II enthroned.

1567- Muscovites build Sunzha Fort in Kabarda.

1569- Ottomans organize a campaign to capture Astrakhan. Union of Lublin: Formal political union of Poland and Lithuania. Muscovy offers an anti-Ottoman alliance to Shah Tahmasp I of the Safavids.

1570- Conquest of Cyprus by Piyale Pasha of the Ottoman Empire.

1571- The Crimean Tatars reach Moscow. Suburbs of Moscow burned. Tsar Ivan IV has to leave the city.

1572- The *oprichnina* in Muscovy ends.

1576- Shah Tahmasp I dies. İsmail II enthroned.

1577- Kabardinians send envoys to the tsar.

1578- Ottoman-Safavid War begins. Muscovites erect a fort in Kabarda.

1579- Stroganov expedition against the Khanate of Siberia.

1581- Ivan IV kills his own son and heir.

1582- Muscovy signs the Treaty of Jam Zapolski and renounces its claims to Livonia and Polotsk. The Stroganov army conquers the Khanate of Siberia.

1583- Muscovy cedes its Baltic lands to Sweden with the Treaty of Plussa. End of the Livonian Wars.

1584- Ivan IV dies. His son Fodor enthroned.

1586- Muscovite-Georgian negotiations begin.

1587- Muscovite envoys visit King Alexander II of Kakheti. Ottoman officials decide to undertake a campaign to capture Astrakhan. Abbas I becomes Shah of Safavid Iran.

1588- Muscovites construct Terek fortress at the mouth of the Terek River.

1589- The Patriarchate of Moscow created. Metropolitan Iova becomes Patriarch.

1590- Treaty of Istanbul between Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran; Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the North Caucasus under Ottoman rule. Muscovite-Swedish War commences.

1591- Crimean Tatars raid Muscovy.

1591- Fodor's brother and only male heir to Muscovite throne, Dmitrii, assassinated in Uglich.

1592- Voevoda of Terek Alexander Zasekin attacks Daghestani lands.

1593- Zasekin captures Tarku, capital of the Shamkhalate. Habsburg-Ottoman War begins.

1594- Daghestanis with the help of the Ottomans expel the Muscovite troops.

1595- Muscovy acquires Baltic territories from Sweden.

1598- Fodor, the last Rurikid tsar, dies. Boris Godunov becomes tsar. The Time of Troubles begins.

1601- A famine kills more than one million people in Russia.

1603- Safavid-Ottoman War begins.

1604- Boris Godunov orders invasion of Daghestan.

1605- Boris Godunov dies suddenly. His son Fedor Godunov enthroned. Muscovite troops in Daghestan annihilated by the Daghestani and Ottoman forces. End of Muscovite influence in the North Caucasus.

1606- First False Dmitrii deposes Fedor Godunov.

1612- Ottomans and Safavids sign the Treaty of Nasuh Pasha.

1613- Mikhail Romanov, elected tsar by the *Zemskii Sobor*.



Map 1 The North Caucasus 1560-1578



Map 2 The North Caucasus 1583-1603 and the Ottoman Supply Route

GLOSSARY

aamistadi (or *aamista/tawad*) nobility among the Abazas.

ahipshi serfs among the Abazas.

akçe main currency in the Ottoman Empire.

akha (or *ah*) an Abaza chief.

amanat a hostage requested from local rulers by the Muscovites as security.

anyayoutskia (or *tefekashou*) land-owning peasants among the Abazas.

atalık foster-father tradition among the Circassians.

aul a mountain village in Daghestan.

azat a slave among the Kabardinians.

bey once a ruler, then prince, and in the sixteenth century denoted a governor.

beylerbeyilik a governor-generalship in the Ottoman Empire.

beylerbey a governor-general in the Ottoman Empire.

burg a fortress-like stronghold made of stones in the North Caucasus.

cagar (or *rayat*) peasants upon who forced labour were imposed in Daghestan

cemaat a rural commune in Daghestan.

cerahor a worker in the Ottoman Empire.

chanka son of a prince born by a commoner woman in Daghestan.

defterdar a book-keeper, finance official in the Ottoman Empire.

dezhenugo a title denoting a less noble person among the Kabardinians.

dizdar a castellan in the Ottoman Empire.

emirü'l-umera a supreme commander in Islamic parlance used by the Ottomans.

gramota an imperial order written by the Muscovite tsar.

hanzade a son of the Crimean khan.

haraç payment made to the Crimeans by Muscovy, Poland-Lithuania.

hil'at a robe of honour.

hisareri resident soldiers of an Ottoman fortress.

hükm an Ottoman imperial order.

istimalet Ottoman policy of reconciliation.

kabak an estate belonging to Kabardinian or Adyghe nobility.

kekovat (or *keykuvat*) third-in-rank to the succession in the Greater Nogay Horde.

kethüda a representative in the Crimean Khanate.

kholop a slave, servant among the Muscovites.

knyaz a prince in Muscovite parlance.

kul a slave, servant among the Ottomans.

ma'sum (or *tabarasan shah*) a ruler of the Tabarasan Principality in Daghestan

mirza (or *murza*) originally from Persian *emir-zade*, a prince; a title used for North Caucasus elites by the Muscovites and Ottomans.

mühimme defteri register of imperial orders written by the Ottoman sultan or the Imperial Council.

mutasarrıf an Ottoman provincial official.

nakaz instructions prepared for Muscovite envoys sent to foreign rulers.

nişancı a chief-scribe in the Ottoman Empire.

nureddin a heir-apparent of the Greater Nogay Horde and second in line to succession to the Crimean throne.

nutsal a ruler of the Avars of Daghestan.

og (or *loganapit*) peasants upon whom forced labour were imposed among the Kabardinians.

oprichnina a period of political oppression and terror against the boyars and public to reduce power of the former and increase the autocratic powers of the Muscovite tsar.

‘ōşr tithe tax in the Ottoman Empire.

palanka a redoubt.

pamiat’ memorandum prepared for Muscovite envoys sent to foreign rulers.

pominki gifts given to the Crimean khan or local rulers by the Muscovite tsar.

posol’skia kniga an ambassadorial book prepared for each embassy dispatched to a foreign ruler.

pshi a prince among the Kabardinians and Adyghees.

pshihua (or *pschim yapsch*) a grand prince or prince of the princes in Kabarda.

pshitle peasants upon whom forced labour was imposed among the Adyghees.

resm-i çift annual tax on farmlands in the Ottoman Empire.

sala uzden nobility who were granted the best lands in the Shamkhalate of Daghestan.

sancak an Ottoman province. It also refers to annuities granted to officials and local rulers from a *sancak*.

sancakbey an Ottoman governor.

serdar an Ottoman commander.

shert a written pledge given by local rulers to the Muscovite tsar.

shmakhal a ruler of the Shamkhalate of Daghestan.

silahdar weapon-masters in the Ottoman Empire.

stateinye spiski reports written by Muscovite envoys.

streltsy Muscovite military unit armed with firearms.

tekhoqotle land-owning peasants among the Adyghees.

tlakotlesh a title denoting a more noble person among the Kabardinians.

tlfekotl land-owning peasants among the Kabardinians.

unatle a slave among the Adyghees.

unavi a slave among the Abazas.

usmi (or *ustmii*) a ruler of the Daghestani Kaytaks.

uzden noble agricultural lords, vassals of the Daghestani Shamkhal.

uzden (or *uozden*, *özden*) noble class among the Adyghes.

voivode a ruler of Moldova or Wallachia under the Ottomans.

vol'nost' notion of freedom among the Cossacks.

work (or *werk*, *uork*) nobility among the Kabardinians.

yarım-shamkhal (or *krym-shamkhal*) a heir-apparent in the Shamkhalate of Daghestan.

yasir (or *kul*) a slave among the Daghestanis.

yurd an appanage, territory assigned to sons of rulers.

zeuche an assembly of gentry among the Kabardinians.

zhalovanie annuities paid to local rulers by the Muscovite tsar.

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